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[CHRISTMAS-EVE—THE RECONCILIATION.]

UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

A CHRISTMAS TALE.

Ye who have scorned each other,
Or injured friend or brother,
In this fast-fading year;
Ye who, by word or deed,
Have made a kind heart bleed,
Come gather here!

Away in the peaceful country, where the stars shone down on rural English homes, the Christmas chimes rang out on the clear night air. Aged couples, tottering down the hill of life, guided by children and grandchildren, stole up the sacred aisles of the house of prayer, and knelt in reverential awe and thanksgiving for the Babe born more than eighteen hundred years ago in the Bethlehem manger, and raised up their hearts and voices in praise.

While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around, and glory shone around.

Happy family circles gathered round the merry yule log fire! Happy hearts met beneath the mistletoe, and happy young heads nestled down mid the soft pillows, peeping furtively through the half-open door towards the big chimneys; trying, oh! so hard to keep awake, and see the funny little man they expected

to come down and put the pretty things in their stockings mamma hung so invitingly near, and wondering with childish curiosity how the said funny little man can get over that big pile of crackling logs, or coals, and not tumble in and burn himself and chattels, or smut all the pretty toys.

Two parties had met in the large, old, handsome manor house of Sir Mortimer Grant—one above and one below.

Sir Mortimer and his good lady received, with courteous English hospitality, the gentry from far and near, who rolled up in their carriages, and were deposited for the one above.

Dame Jervis, the housekeeper, and the butler, her good man, received with as much hospitality, though, mayhap, more awkwardly proffered, the gaily attired lads and lasses of the village, who came tripping into the great servants' hall, for the one below.

A grand band discoursed sweet music for the graceful waltz or stately minuet above; the merry fiddler, in high glee, capered among the dancers in the lively reel or merry country-dance below.

The gallant gentleman bent most gracefully to kiss his fair lady-love beneath the huge mistletoe above; and the as equally gallant rustic smacked the lips most heartily of some fair village belle beneath another huge mistletoe below.

Truly happy faces beamed on happy faces, both above and below, that merry Christmas-eve, in the spacious home of Sir Mortimer Grant. There was a

big plate of bright English sixpences, laid aside for the Christmas carol singers, who come in parties, and sing the sweet words in honour of our Saviour's birth-night without, with the bright stars gleaming down on them; then, by the kind invitation that is usually given and expected, enter, partake of the good cheer and the contents of the plate, and depart for some other equally hospitable house. Sometimes a party of young men, fantastically dressed, so as to represent Old Christmas, the Old Year, the New Year, and St. George, arrive, and in a species of pantomime play, highly amuse the spectators by their antics, and delight themselves afterwards with glasses of beer or mulled wine, and the contents of a well-filled plate of money, ere leaving the company.

Christmas games of all kinds were heartily indulged in, and the cushion-dance and forfeits were, of course, not omitted.

Among all this gaiety, though, there was a sad look in both Sir Mortimer and Lady Grant's faces this Christmas-eve. Five years before that night they had turned from their hearth and home a loved and only daughter, a beautiful girl, who had refused the hand of an earl's son, and given her heart to an adventurer, her parents termed him, with neither fortune nor title to render him in their eyes worthy the hand of their daughter; and when on that night, Christmas-eve, five years before, they both had knelt under the mistletoe that hung in the great hall, and confessed their love

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and their marriage, Sir Mortimer, in a towering passion, ordered them from his door, never to enter it again under penalty of his curse.

Lady Mortimer was of proud old English blood; and though she did not storm and go into a passion, her back was turned to the outstretched arms of her daughter; and so, out under the stars of that chilly Christmas sky, the two had wandered over the diamond frost-sparkling path into the icy covered church, and kneeling before the altar, these two loving but sorrowing hearts asked humbly of their Father in heaven for forgiveness of anything wrong.

A letter, full of piteous entreaties for forgiveness, from both daughter and son, came over the blue ocean, and rested at last in the hands of the irate Sir Mortimer Grant. There was a tender relenting spot in both father and mother's hearts when they read the loving, beseeching letter of their beautiful daughter. They had sadly missed her—sadly longed for one more sight of their sweet, gentle child, and had almost held out their relenting hands over the dividing sea to the anxiously awaiting couple. But not yet could they bring their haughty hearts to pardon their child's flagrant act of disobedience. Let them suffer and sue a little longer—let another letter come over the waste of waters; then, perhaps, an answer would find its way back.

Another letter did come, but never reached its destination; and so at last, despairing of forgiveness from their titled parents, no more messages came; and so it came to pass that the two young hearts could have been entirely happy but for the forgiveness denied them; two older, but prouder hearts, mourned in secret the absence of an only child, but could not bend from their haughty, proud decision.

"More carol singers! Bessy, mull some more wine, and fill the plate with pennies; there are only two of them." And Dame Jervis hurried from the finish of a lively country-dance, to issue her orders.

A man and a woman's voices mingled in the sweetest accord in the words of a beautiful carol. No common voices theirs. Every one paused to listen, both above and below, and orders came from Sir Mortimer and Lady Grant to conduct them within, by especial invitation.

So Dame Jervis stood complacently in the doorway, inviting their entrance. A tall man, muffled in a big overcoat and slouching hat, holding in his arms a laughing-eyed, curly-headed little girl; a slender woman's figure, muffled in warm furs, and deeply veiled, holding a chubby boy by the hand, passed her, and were conducted up the broad oaken stairs by the officious butler himself.

Sir Mortimer Grant and his wife were standing under the mistletoe, speaking in playful badinage of the time long years ago, when he had won her, the fair daughter of a baron, and kissed her beneath the mistletoe, in her father's hall.

When the strange carol singers entered, there was a cry—a cry of long pent-up emotion, and the slight figure of the strange lady singer was kneeling before the stately pair, her veil thrown back, and her slender hands held beseechingly up.

"Oh! mother, oh! father—dear parents, forgive! forgive your only child. Five years ago to-night you turned us from your hearts and home. Take us back; oh! take us back, to—to—"

And covering her face with her hands, heartrending sob burst from her lips, as the tall stranger knelt by her side, supporting with his strong right arm his gentle wife, his slouching cap falling off, and the handsome face of their son-in-law looking pleadingly up.

Down on their knees the aged couple knelt, clasping in one embrace their long-lost son and daughter. The little boy and girl fondled the gray hair of the two bowed heads, whispering:

"Grandma, grandpa, Maggie and Henney love you; papa and mamma love us to."

The guests stood by with surprised faces, but smiling eyes; the mistletoe swayed gently to and fro above, dropping its slender green leaves as though in blessing on the kneeling group beneath. Dame Jervis and her good man, the old and honoured servants, stood smilingly side by side, waiting for an opportunity to greet their young mistress; while further back, gathered in groups, or peeping through the doors, were the rest of the servants, intermixed with the lads and lasses, all anxious for a word from one who had been loved and mourned through those long five years; and above all, the joyous peal of Christmas chimes stole in subdued cadence through the air, from the old ivy-covered church where five years before the young couple had knelt, asking for forgiveness;—and now every one bowed involuntarily when the old gray-haired father raised his hands in prayer and blessing over his children, thanking God for the happiness accorded to him that night; and all over merry England no happier hearts were there than had met under the mistletoe in the honoured home of Sir Mortimer Grant.

Nothing could have satisfied the reconciled parents but the solemn promise that every Christmas-eve should find them all reunited again in the old mansion, and assembled lovingly under the mistletoe.

THE SAILOR'S WIFE.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

My friend the sailor's wife was a pretty little woman, black-haired and blue-eyed, with cheeks like damask roses, who went singing all day long about her pretty house, which was full from top to bottom of rare shells and branches of coral, Chinese fans and Japanese drinking vessels, and wonderful brigs and schooners, with a host of other curiosities only to be met with in a sailor's dwelling.

Looking at her, with her healthful bloom and bounding step, I could not have fancied that she had ever had a care in all her life. Yet this is the story that she told me one stormy Christmas-eve, as we sat together by her fireside, dressing a doll which was destined to occupy a little red stocking already hanging from the mantel, and listening to the wind, which went moaning and screaming about the house and down the chimneys in a manner which would have been woefully suggestive of the Baashee to superstitious ears.

"It was upon a Christmas-eve that I first met Willie; a beautiful night—not blustering and stormy like this, but with a clear sky, full of frosty stars, which twinkled like a host of diamonds, and such a moon! I think still there never was such a pure and holy moonlight as that which lit Willie and I across the frozen fields on the first night on which we walked together.

"Bell Bray, a far-away cousin of mine, had chosen Christmas-eve for her wedding night, and I was to be her bridesmaid. I remember yet how beautiful she looked in her soft white dress, with those pearls—her bridegroom's love gift—on her arms and bosom. I looked at her as I twisted some fragrant hot-house roses in my hair, and wondered if any one was ever quite so lovely. I wondered, too, (as girls will at such times,) whether I should ever meet with any one whom I could love, and whether I should some time stand as she did now, with my bride's veil about me, listening for the step of one who from that moment must fill my life's cup with weal or woe, and make my future years a blessing or a burden. From this thought I had passed to wondering whether Bell would be happy, and whether Fred, Ardent would be as devoted a husband as he was a lover, and stood wrapped in a reverie, with my yet unfastened bracelet in my hand, when Bell's voice aroused me.

"Have you seen Fred's groomsman yet?" she asked.

"No, I have not! I do not even know his name!" I answered.

"Neither do I know him very well," said Bell. "But I have seen him once. He is wonderfully handsome, and Fred thinks all the world of him. His name is Hall—William Hall—and he is a sailor."

"A sailor!" I said. "I have never known a sailor. Is he like other people?"

"Pretty much," laughed Bell. "He is first mate, I believe, of the Lady Maude, or some such vessel—Lady something, I know, and I believe it is Maude. He saved fifty passengers, at the risk of his own life, from the wreck of a burning vessel last year, and, in fact, is always doing such generous, heroic sort of things, as one seems naturally to expect from a sailor."

"A sailor!"

"I always had romantic dreams about the sea and those who sailed upon it, and I felt my cheeks flush as Bell spoke.

"A long while before, one Christmas as it happened, a wandering fortune-teller, coming to our farm-house, had told me that I should marry a sailor. She had told Bridget, our servant-woman, that she was to marry a rich gentleman in six months, and poor Bridget was single yet!

"Still, I believed firmly in the coming sailor who was to woo and win me.

"What if this should be he? What if I was destined before long to feel that soft emotion of which as yet I had only dreamed?

"These thoughts filled my mind involuntarily, and would not leave me. So that I am very sure my cheeks were redder than the roses in my hair when that low tap came at the door, and made us both start and tremble.

"I took an arm—a strong one and a stout—that was all I knew; for I did not dare look into the face belonging to it; and in a few moments we stood, and Bell's hand was in Fred's, and the old minister was saying something—what I did not know, and I saw a ring glittering on a taper finger, and saw the bride, amidst a shower of kisses and congratulations, smiling

and weeping, and looking very happy and very much frightened all at once.

"It was over. Bell was married—and I—yes, I must confess it—was already in love.

"I don't know how it came about. A magnetic sort of thrill seemed to run from his heart into mine through the sleeve I touched.

"He had bent down to whisper to me, and our eyes had met. Somehow, in an instant both loved each other, and both knew it.

"You may not believe it, and such things are rare; but I can vouch for the assertion that they do happen sometimes, from actual experience.

"Willie certainly was the other half of my soul, and the sundried moieties recognized each other in an instant.

"That night, after the dancing was done, the supper eaten, and the guests dispersed, Willie Hall went home with me across the fields in the still moonlight.

"I was governess to Squire Hartwright's three unruly children then; for our old farm had passed into the hands of strangers long before, and of all the large family to which I had belonged, only the white slabs in the village churchyard and the grieving memories in my own heart remained on earth.

"I did not ask him to call upon me, and he said nothing about a future meeting; yet I felt as sure that I should meet him soon as that I should rise next morning.

"My hand was held a little longer in his own than common courtesy required, and I waited in the open doorway until his handsome figure had passed out of sight, and that was all.

"But he told me afterwards that he dreamed of me all night; and I never closed my eyes, but lay awake until the dawn broke, thinking of him and of the gipsy's prophecy.

"We met next Sunday. He entered church a little after I did, and sat in the pew behind me. I did not see him, but I knew he was there, somehow or other, without turning my head. So that I was not surprised, on going out, to find him standing, hat in hand, in the churchyard, waiting for me.

"He saw me home again. This time I did not take his arm, for it was noon, and the village road was full of people, going home from church. But he walked very close to me, and all the way along we talked together as I had never talked to any one before. Not lovers' talk—oh no! not one word of that. But I felt that I was speaking to some one I understood and who comprehended me; and thoughts which I mainly kept to myself when with strangers found language to clothe themselves with then. Before that walk was over I knew him better than I would have known any one else in a year.

"After this we met very often. Every Sabbath. Sometimes during the week. He called upon me now; and my eldest pupil, a pert girl of fourteen, had begun to tease me about his visits, and insinuated that she should some day have another governess.

"At last, when the spring buds were on the branches, he left me for a long voyage. But before he went he had asked me to go with him to the water side, and there, with the sun sinking down behind the purple hills, and flocks of homeward-going birds winging their way through the clear air, and the far-off sounds of farm labourers whistling as they plodded through the fields, and of slow jingling cow-bells, and the musical supper horn coming to our ears, I stood beside him, looking down into the water, for I knew not how long, wondering how I could bear existence when he had left me.

"I felt him drawing closer to me. I knew that one strong arm had twined about my waist, and that his other hand had taken both of mine, and still I did not move; could not, indeed, for my heart was beating furiously, and my limbs trembled so, that but for that circling arm I must have fallen.

"Then words broke on my ear—tender, earnest words—telling of his love, imploring me to answer that I returned it, and to bid him leave me, not a lonely man, but with the happy knowledge that his promised bride watched and hoped for his return.

"I knew nothing more until I found myself sitting beneath a tree, with my face wet with sprinkled water, and my head reposing on his bosom. For the first time in all my life, I had fainted.

"And so we were betrothed; and on the morrow he kissed me, and went on board the 'Lady Maude.'

"He was gone three months; but the ocean was very kind to him, and the ship had never made so prosperous a voyage before, so that he came back in high health and spirits, looking very brown and wonderfully handsome.

"Coming home from church the next Sunday, he made me promise that I would be married to him on the next Christmas—just one year from the night of my cousin's wedding, on which we met each other first.

"We were married in the little church, and Bell, handsome as ever, made a wonderful entertainment for us in her pretty cottage; and I was very, very happy, the more so that Bell had told me how happy her own short year of married life had been, and how her Fred. said that my Willie was the noblest fellow who ever lived, and would be as constant as the sun."

"Before the new year came we were in our home. Only a small place, for Willie was not rich, but as precious to me as though it had been a palace. Everywhere I saw some token of his love for me—something I had admired, some book I had expressed a wish to read, and over the mantel, most precious thing of all, hung Willie's portrait."

"It was not silly in me to kiss it, and I know that Willie did not think so, though he said it was, and tried to laugh, for there were tears in his beautiful brown eyes, and his arm encircled my waist, oh! so tenderly."

"There came a time afterwards when I wished that I had died then, and gone to heaven with his kiss upon my lips. A year passed by—oh! such a happy year. Twice in that time he had made a short voyage, and returned to me safe and well; and now the Christmas time was close at hand, and he was to be with me, as I thought, all the winter. I was busy and merry as a housewife could be, for on that coming Christmas day I was to cook my first grand dinner; and Bell and Fred. were to spend the day with us. Turkeys were to be roasted, puddings boiled, and pies baked. I had a little servant girl to help me, and Will. pretended to help also, though somehow his assistance seemed to evaporate in a cozy *tête-à-tête* over the fire with my head upon his shoulder, and a cessation of all household duties. At last only one day lay between the present time and Christmas. I stood, with some little pride and vanity in what I had accomplished, beside the open door of my pantry, looking at the array of pies and cakes and glittering jars of jelly."

"It was growing dusk, and my little servant was setting the table in the dining-room. The lamps were not lit, but the grey light of lingering day mingled with the crimson glow from the grate, and made the whole apartment and the pantry where I stood tolerably light. As I stood there, jingling my keys, I heard my husband's step upon the stairs, and knew that he was about to enter my room. I did not turn. I wanted him to come behind me in a boyish, merry way, to head, and clasp me about the waist and kiss me before I saw him. But I was disappointed. He went to the fire-place, and stood with his arm upon the mantel and his head bent down upon it. I ran to him in a moment."

"Are you ill, Willie? I asked."

"No, Rose, not ill," he said; "only sad."

"Sad! and why, Willie?"

"My dearest, partly because I must make you sad also. Have you courage to bear disappointment, little wife?"

"Disappointment! My dear, what are you speaking of? Has anything happened to Bell or Fred?"

"No, Rose."

"Then it is something about money. That will not trouble me, except as it annoys you."

"It is nothing about money, Rose," he said. "Lay your head upon my shoulder, and give me that darling little hand! You know you are a sailor's wife, Rose, and that one of the greatest hardships of a seaman's life is his constant partings. You will help me to bear my share of this by not being too sadly grieved. Will you not?"

"I began to understand him, and looked up into his eyes in terror."

"Yes, Rose, I must leave you; the Lady Maude sails to-morrow."

"To-morrow, Willie? The day before Christmas!"

"The day before Christmas."

"It cannot be, Willie; such an order would be too cruel; you must be mistaken."

"No, Rose; it is not customary, but the Lady Maude will break the custom; she sails to-morrow."

"For a long voyage?"

"Ay, little one, for a very long voyage; the longest she has taken for years."

"And on Christmas-eve, of all days of the year! I cannot bear it, Will; and I burst into tears—passionate tears, such as I had never shed before. 'Let me go with you,' I said; 'don't leave me now; I have only you in all this weary world—only you—only you!'"

"You cannot go," he answered. "I think it would be impossible."

"Will, I shall die here."

"You would if I were cruel enough to take you upon this rough voyage. Rose, do not weep so."

"Even he who loved me so much must have thought me moved beyond the bounds of reason. I sobbed, and wrung my hands, and clung to him."

"I shall never see you again, I sobbed—never—never! I am sure of that."

"We are sure of nothing," he answered. "God grant that we may yet pass many happy years together."

"But I could not be comforted. All that night I laid awake, sobbing and moaning, and when the hour of parting came, I was like a mad woman. I felt certain that this was our final parting, and that I should never see him more. He was sobbing himself when he unclosed my fingers from his own, and with one lingering kiss turned away to leave me."

"On that Christmas-day, which I had thought would be so happy, I lay upon my pillow, with clothes wet in vinegar about my forehead; and Bell, who had come with the expectation of meeting smiles of welcome, instead of tears and anguish, trying to nurse and comfort me."

"She cooked the turkey, and tried to make me eat and drink; but my Willie was far away upon the ocean, and I could think of nothing else."

"If it were your Fred, you would understand it," I cried, petulantly. "But your husband is a landsman, and can stay at home; while mine must leave me—never, perhaps, to come back again. And just now—just now!"

"And so I laid and wept all that weary day, and by night a little babe lay beside me; a wee, frail creature, with its father's soft brown eyes, brought to me by the angels on that holy Christmas-day."

"At first they had not thought that it would live, and had feared that I also must die. But time brought us both health and strength; and at last a long, loving letter came from Will, and I began to hope again. Yet, the fear which had possessed me that first night returned at intervals; and when the wind blew fiercely, and the rain beat against my casement, I clasped my baby to my bosom and prayed that God would shield its father from the fury of the tempest, and bring him safe unto my arms again."

"It was a terrible winter. Every week brought some new account of wrecks along the coast, and of disasters far upon the ocean. I used to stand with the paper in my hand, not daring to unfold it, lest my eyes should meet some fearful tidings, and see the name of the Lady Maude amongst the list of wrecks which too often filled its columns. But, for a long time, my fears seemed causeless. Letters came from Will at regular intervals, and the Lady Maude weathered the storms which broke above her bravely."

"I think sometimes," wrote Willie, "that my little wife's prayers keep the angels about me, and ward off danger, for many a staunch ship as ours, and many a better man than I, have gone down beneath the waves this wild winter, while we have been unharmed."

"This was the last letter he wrote me. After that came an awful blank. No news, no letter, no message, no anything; but watching, and waiting, and listening to the wailing of the wind, with my baby on my breast. Then old sailors began to whisper that the Lady Maude should have been heard of weeks before, and friends looked pityingly upon me, and I read everywhere that which drove me mad—the thought that the ship was lost. But, in my very desperation, I hoped against hope, and would not believe the worst until some vessel, homeward bound, picked up, far at sea, a bottle sealed and tarred, enclosing a paper, on which these awful words were written:

"We, Adm. Arthur and William Hall, captain and mate of the Lady Maude, in the prospect of immediate death, write this, that our fate may be certain in the minds of those interested in the vessel and those upon her. We struck upon a rock at midnight, and are fast going to pieces. We have neither water nor provisions. Not one passenger remains alive, and half the crew have perished. There is no hope that the ship can remain above water many hours. Our doom is certain and speedy."

"There were dates and statements of the latitude and longitude in which they lay mixed with this, but those were nothing to me. I saw the paper with my own eyes, and recognized my husband's signature, and from that moment all hope was over in my heart."

"He was dead—my own dear Willie—buried beneath the cruel waves of the deep ocean. I should never see him more. All my life I must think of him and long for him, and never see him more—never, never, never! That broad bosom should never again be my pillow; those arms should never more enfold me."

"All the happiness of our betrothal year and of our wedded life must pass from me like a dream. Some time, perhaps, I must look back and wonder if I had really ever been so blessed, or if I had not always been the lonely woman, with no one to care for and protect me, which I must be henceforth. The greatest fear I had was that time might blot out my memory of those happy moments—all that was left me now of my precious golden store of love and bliss."

"The neighbours were very good to me and my poor baby, and I fear I was ungrateful in my sorrow. Bell

and Fred. came down, and tried to take me home with them, and Fred's brother, a rich, good-natured old bachelor, constituted himself nurse and playfellow of my little one, and bought such marvellous toys, and entered into such merry games of romps as made the little fellow crow again with glee. All they could do, they did; but they had no panacea for my broken heart; one thought tortured me day and night, waking and sleeping—Willie was dead."

"On Christmas-eve I sat in my black dress beside the fire, with my babe, now able to creep and clamber about me, on the carpet at my feet. A year before Will. had left me; one year that night my heart was so heavy that I could not weep; and other troubles unthought of until now were pressing upon me. How should I support my little one, or even myself? The money Will. had left in the bank was quite gone. That very day my landlord, a good old man enough, but anxious for his own pocket, had intimated that a better tenant was willing to take my apartments. I needed a thousand things for my little one, and where to get them or what to do I could not tell. Bell and Fred. would help me, but I was too proud to be dependent."

"O, my darling Will, who cared for me so tenderly," I sobbed, "do you see me now?—do you see me now?"

"I caught my baby in my arms and wept over him as I spoke. No words can picture my utter loneliness and desolation. A tap at the door aroused me, and I opened it to admit the genial face and comfortable form of Fred's bachelor brother, with his arms full of packages—presents from Bell and himself. Thoughtful presents—just what I most needed, and coloured bon-bons for the little one. It was like him to think of me that Christmas-eve, and I told him so. He seemed in no haste to go, and I made a cup of tea for him, and we sat talking over it after baby was asleep—sometimes of one thing, sometimes of another, but he seemed absent and distraught, and answered very often at random. At last he changed his seat for the sofa on which I sat, and bending forward, took my hand in his. He was so much older than I, and had stood in such a fatherly relation to me that I did not draw it back, but the kind touch brought tears into my eyes."

"Do not weep, Rose," he said kindly. "Yet, poor child, you have enough to weep for; life has many no one cares for a lonely woman, and you have no one now to shield you from them."

"No one," I answered, "no one; and I wept afresh."

"Rose,"—Mr. Ardent's voice was more tender than usual, and he held my hand a little closer—"dear Rose, give me the right to care for you. I am rich, and I love you dearly. I will be a father to your babe, and you shall never know a care. I am an elderly man, you are but a girl; but you would be happy with me. I am sure you would."

"I took my hand away, and rising, stood a little from him, weeping no longer, but very sad."

"You pain me very much," I said; "it is cruel of you, while tears for Willie are upon my cheek, to speak of love. I cannot love anyone; you ought to know that."

"Give me your respect, your esteem, but think of the life before you. How can you live?—and I am so rich, and so fond of you. Can you not put aside romance for your child's sake? It would be Will's wish that you should, I know."

"Will's wish! Ah, no! Will. would not wish me to marry from mercenary motives—not even for our baby's sake. I know that you mean kindly, and I thank you; but the very thought kills me. I can only wait and pray for the death which shall reunite us. I cannot seek to patch up my happiness by a second marriage. The fate God has been pleased to mete to me, I take submissively. He has ordained me a widow, and a widow I will remain until I die. There is no thought of anything else in my heart, and never will be."

"Until some younger, handsomer man comes wooing," said the old bachelor. "Time heals all wounds."

"It is not your age," I answered. "You have offered me the only temptation which could have had any weight with me—wealth for my child—freedom from the cares of poverty. You are a valued friend. No one can ever be more, believe me, and leave me for to-night," and gently, but firmly, I opened the door, and held out my hand."

"Good-night," I said, and he touched his lips for one moment to my forehead, and so left me."

"I was lonelier than ever when he was gone; and, as I sat beside the fire, I wept again, and murmured Willie's name, as though he could hear me. Was life to be this bitter thing to me for ever? Was there to be no light, no joy, no hope for me on earth? And then I thought of the friend to whom I had been taught to look in time of trouble, and crossed the room to get my little Bible from its shelf."

"The door had remained ajar since Mr. Ardent left, and, as I passed it, I saw a figure standing just without, in the dark hall.

"Mr. Ardent, I thought, at first; but in a moment I saw that it was much taller, and wrapped, besides, in some dark garment, cloak, or mantle, which had a foreign look.

"I was startled, but I advanced boldly.

"Do you want any one?" I asked; and he replied in a low, husky voice:

"I would like to see Mrs. Hall."

"That is my name," I answered; "will you walk in?"

"But the figure did not move, and the voice went on:

"I came to speak of your husband. I have heard that he has been lost at sea."

"It is true," I answered, bursting into tears.

"Alas! it is true."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure," I repeated. "Why do you ask?"

"Men have been cast on desert islands, or picked up by foreign vessels. It is long before you can be sure. I—don't be frightened."

"Was it a sob or a laugh which mingled with his words? I could not tell, for it sounded like both. I pressed towards him, but he stepped back.

"If you know anything, tell me; in heaven's name!" I cried. "Don't torture me. You do not think my Willie dead. What do you know?"

"That he lives! that he was saved! that he has come home at last, weary and poor and travel-stained, but with a heart more full of love than ever; that he is here—here, Rose, holding you against his bosom! My darling, my life, my soul!"

"It was Willie's voice. Those were his arms which encircled me.

"If people ever died from joy, I should have died then in my great happiness.

"The only living being saved from the wreck of the Lady Maude, and saved only at the last moment when succour could have availed him—God had brought him back to me, and I have never ceased to thank Him since the precious boon he granted me upon that happy Christmas-eve."

And as my friend ceased speaking, I heard a step in the hall, and a tall, handsome man, with something of the sailor in his garb and mien, entered the room and coming up behind her, passed his arm about her waist and kissed her on her rosy cheek.

AGNES SUTHERLAND. A CHRISTMAS TALE.

JAMES SUTHERLAND was a wealthy merchant. He lived in aristocratic style, and was noted for his liberal expenditure of the wealth gained by long application to mercantile business, in the purchase of pleasure and enjoyment.

His house was one of elegance and plenty. His table daily groaned under the weight of tempting viands and substantial luxuries.

Every wish was gratified; and all the surroundings of his palatial residence partook of a luxurious supply of wealth.

He had been a successful merchant—had been, we say. Three years previous to the time our story opens, he had retired from public life, to spend his ample means in the purchase of enjoyment, and to devote himself to the society of his wife and only child, a daughter, just ripening into womanhood.

Agnes Sutherland was a fair-haired, blue-eyed creature of eighteen summers. Her deep blue eyes were wells of intellectuality; her mouth exhibited marked lineaments of character and determination; her full forehead bore the impress of a mind capable of dwelling with pleasure on the contemplation of ancient and modern lore; while her small and delicately-moulded hands and feet denoted her aristocratic parentage—an ignorance of labour; while her genial disposition and warm, loving nature, rendered her an object of affection to all who came within the circle of her influence.

She had been carefully reared beneath the watchful eye of a loving mother, and had received an education proportionate to the means of her father, and she had done credit to the instruction imparted to her by the most highly educated and accomplished instructors. She at the time our story opens, had laid aside her books and made her *début* in fashionable society, sided in her enjoyment of life by the immense wealth of her father.

It was the commencement of the winter season. Balls and parties were being given and attended; and while the merchant princes of the great metropolis were being driven by liveried coachmen to the mansions of their aristocratic friends, their neighbours, but a few streets distant from the scenes of mirth, were groaning with anguish at the near presence of the gaunt wolf hunger, while poverty was stealing the rags from

them, leaving them exposed to the pitiless storms of the season. It was a stormy Christmas night, as a splendid carriage stopped before the door of a stately edifice in — street. The obsequious footman threw open the door of the carriage, and a young man, stepping forth, handed out a young lady, dressed in warm, luxurious clothing. As they turned to go up the steps of the building, a young girl, bending beneath the fierce winter blast, slipped on the icy walk and fell directly in front of Agnes Sutherland.

The young man would have passed around the prostrate form, but Agnes, stooping, gently raised the head of the poor girl in her arms, and brushing back the dark, wavy mass of hair from the pale brow, she smoothed the temples with her own white, warm hands, and somewhat revived the almost insensible girl; while Mr. Frederick Adolphus Fitzgerald applied his cambric to his olfactorys, "perfectly disgusted that—an—pretty girl of Sutherland's—aw—should touch that thing dressed so extremely vulgar, an!" as he expressed himself to a fellow "avell" when relating the circumstance to him some hours later.

The girl slowly opened her eyes; and not seeming to comprehend her situation, she looked at Agnes in surprise and made an attempt to stand upon her feet.

Gradually, as her mind assumed its accustomed sway, she remembered passing along the street, and while looking at the dashing equipage of the Sutherlands, her foot had slipped and she had fallen, striking her head heavily on the walk.

The truth broke at once upon her—she was injured; and, as she thought of dear ones at home, she uttered an involuntary groan. Agnes, bending down, inquired in a kind voice if she was injured? She replied:

"I fear I am, dear lady; and oh! who will care for mother and sister?"

Soothing the poor girl, the rich heiress said, in a kind tone:

"I will assist you, my dear," and asking where she lived, she gently assisted her into the carriage, bidding the coachman to convey her home; and, placing a well-filled purse in her hand, she promised to call and see her on the morrow.

Agnes felt, for the first time, the happy consciousness of having alleviated the distress of one of her poorer sisters; and she passed through the rooms of Mr. and Mrs. Cushing that evening with a firmer step and a fuller heart than any in that gay assemblage.

Ever and anon, through the entire evening, would the features of Alice Grey appear before the mind of Agnes Sutherland. They were features that, once seen, could never be forgotten. A classic head, over which fell wavy masses of rich, dark hair; a full black eye, that could melt with affection, or flash with pride and conscious worth; a mouth, small and beautifully chiselled—firm and unyielding, or wreathed in smiles—and you have a very faint idea of the features of Alice Grey, the beautiful seamstress.

She was rather beneath the medium size, her hands and feet being shaped in nature's most perfect mould. She was twenty-one years of age, and for five long years those tapering fingers had been the main support of a widowed mother and invalid sister. She had toiled through winter snows and summer heat until she felt weak and weary, and almost worn out with the unceasing toil of years. Her father died five years previous with a malignant fever, and after settling his accounts, it was discovered that out of an immense fortune, unfortunate speculations had swept away every shilling. Mrs. Grey, naturally feeble, gave way under this adverse stroke of fortune, and was, for a time, completely prostrate. The spirit of Alice, equal to the emergency, arose from the blow with its accustomed elasticity, and she prepared to battle with a hard and bitter adversity, and nobly had she sustained her part in the great life drama. Mrs. Grey had an only brother, who left home years before, from whom no tidings had ever been received, save that he was seeking a fortune in a distant land.

Two years passed since the incident narrated above took place. In a small cabin on one of the mountain streams of British Columbia, near Fraser River, lying on a pile of rough bark and skins, is an aged man, in the agonies of the death struggle. Seated by his side is a young man, not more than twenty-five years of age, dressed in a hunting suit of deer-skin, the old man being dressed in a wretched suit of old mining clothes, patched and tied together in every conceivable style. His eyes wander restlessly from side to side of the cabin; and anon, uttering a stifled groan as pain racked his body, with great difficulty he speaks:

"Yes, James, I have sent for you to-night because I have much to say to you, and this night is my last on earth. I know it, I feel it. I am going to meet my—my—" He stopped, and shuddering, continued, "No matter. I will merely give you the outlines of a wretched life that is fast closing. I was born in

London, of wealthy parents, and received all the advantages of a liberal education. I was a wild fellow, and laughed at the counsels of a kind father. I drank and played, and my associates were not of the most refined character. But enough of this. I met Eva Winston at a ball one Christmas-eve; it was a case of 'love at first sight,' and I resolved that night, if I could win that girl, I would break for ever my evil associations, and love and honour her as my wife. I called on her several times at her father's house, and I think she looked on me with favour; but, unluckily for me, her only brother had met me several times when under the influence of liquor and surrounded by my evil companions, and he warned her against receiving any advances from me. When I asked her to become my wife, she stated what her brother George had told her, and refused to listen to my protestations of love and promises of reform. Her refusal maddened me, and I swore to be—"

"Hold!" cried the young man; "did you say her name was Winston?"

"I did."

"Why, that is—"

"All in good time, James; do not interrupt me; I will tell you all. I swore to be revenged on George Winston. From that time I lived but for one purpose. Revenge is sweet; but, oh! the bitterness of remorse."

The old man groaned, and closed his eyes to shut out some grim phantom.

With an effort, he proceeded:

"George Winston, came to this colony. He accumulated immense wealth. I had grown sordid and miserly. I scrupled not to use every means for my own interest, and I heaped up gold by the million. I robbed, I gambled, I murdered!"

James shrank from the miser with disgust.

"Do not leave me!" cried the dying wretch; "I am dying, and I want to make a confession of my crimes. I enticed George Winston to gamble. Night after night found us at the cards. He was soon to return to England, where he married a lady, who, after giving birth to a son, lived but a few years. The boy was left in England to be educated, until Winston returned to bring him to the colony. This I knew. But the knowledge of this fact did not induce me to deviate from my purpose. I had sworn to kill George Winston, and I would do it, though ten sons were living to avenge his death. One night we had played heavily. It was the night but one before he was to leave on his return to England. I won heavily; he accused me of cheating; I gave him the lie, at the same time disclosing my true name to him, and my indomitable purpose to take his life. We drew our knives. Oh, that fearful moment! Would I could recall that evening and undo my work, so well planned and executed! I watched my opportunity, and making a feint to seize his arm, I drove my knife into his bosom. He fell to the ground and expired, with the name of his son upon his lips. Oh, God! water!" cried, in husky accents, the crime-hardened wretch—"give me water!"

James handed him a vessel containing some which he eagerly seized and emptied, when he continued:

"I buried him near his own cabin, and removed, his treasure here. You will find—in a box—under my head—papers—all. Oh, God!—Winston!"

It was over; the criminal had gone to meet his victim before a just judge. James covered the body with a wretched blanket, and then began a search for the box and papers alluded to by the old man in his dying moments.

Removing some of the pieces of bark from under the head of the wretched dead, he discovered a large pine box, bound with strong iron bands, and secured with a heavy lock.

But where was the key? Rightly conjecturing that the box contained something of importance, he searched the body for the key, and found it suspended around the neck of the old miser. Unlocking the box, its contents were brought to view.

Immediately on the top lay a packet of papers; the remainder of the contents consisted of solid gold pieces.

Drawing a paper from the packet, he read aloud, by the light of a pine knot, ignited and placed in an upright position in the ground that composed the floor of the cabin:

"You are the son of George Winston, as you already know. I wrote to the person in England having charge of you, that your father had died and given you over to my guidance; also that I wanted you to come to Columbia. You came. I told you to take the cabin next to me, and I would take charge of you. You loved a hunter's life, and indulged in hunting to your heart's content.

"You have an aunt in England. Your father's sister, Eva, married a merchant named Grey. Seek her out, and tell her I did loving her more than life.

My immense wealth I give to you. Use it to alleviate the sorrows of mankind, and, oh! forgive the harm I did you, and the crime I committed.

"PAUL MARTIN."

James Winston folded the paper, and replaced it in the packet.

A gay party of four persons were sitting in one of the boxes at the opera. In the intervals of the opera, they were laughing and chatting, and levelling their glasses at the occupants of other boxes. The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Sutherland, Agnes, and her cousin, a captain in the army.

"Who is that foreign-looking gentleman opposite, captain?" pointing to a box occupied by a young man alone, who was looking at the party as Agnes spoke.

The captain looked through his glass at the person indicated.

"Why, by Jove! that's young Winston, from British Columbia," he replied. "I had not heard of his arrival. He is a fine fellow, and immensely wealthy. Would you like an introduction?"

"I would," was the quiet reply of Agnes, and away went the officer.

After greeting James, he requested him to go to his uncle's box with him, and receive an introduction to his lovely cousin.

James assented.

After the formula of introducing him was over, conversation was resumed, and became animated.

Agnes was charmed with James, and the acquaintance thus begun at the opera ended in a proposal, some weeks afterwards, of marriage, which was accepted by the blushing Agnes, who loved James with her whole heart.

The coming Christmas was the day named on which the nuptials were to be celebrated.

Time passed swiftly, and but three days intervened before Christmas, when James called on Agnes quite early in the day.

He found the carriage at the door, and Agnes, prepared to go out, was descending the steps of her father's mansion.

"Where now, my pretty bird?" he said, playfully, after the warm greetings were over.

"To see a very poor, but very dear friend. Will you accompany me?" said Agnes.

"With all my heart," was the reply; and James assisted Agnes into the carriage, stepping in after her.

Agnes was so profuse in her descriptions of the loneliness and intelligence of her poor friend, that James was eager to learn the name of this particular friend.

"Wait and see," said Agnes.

The carriage stopped at a humble, but neat tenement in — Street.

James assisted Agnes to alight, and then followed her to the door of her dwelling.

It was opened by Alice Grey, who checked the exclamation of joy that rose to her lips as she saw a gentleman standing by the side of Agnes.

"My dear Alice, allow me to introduce my future husband, Mr. Winston. Mr. Winston—Miss Grey."

James started as he heard Alice's name; but, restraining his feelings, he followed them into the neatly-furnished room.

Mrs. Grey now came forward, and was introduced to James. He turned pale; and seizing the arm of Mrs. Grey, he asked, in a voice trembling with emotion:

"My dear madam, what is your Christian name?"

"Eva," said Mrs. Grey, surprised at the abrupt question.

"And your maiden name was—"

"Eva Winston!" she interrupted.

"My dear aunt!" exclaimed James, embracing her warmly, and extending his hands to Alice and the invalid Esther. "My cousins, I am the son of George Winston, who was murdered in Columbia, a few years since, by Paul Martin."

"Oh, my poor brother George!" said Mrs. Grey; "dead! and by the hand of one unworthy the name of man!"

Christmas morning dawned, bright and clear, and the bells of the parish church rang out a joyous peal, as a bright bridal party entered that sacred edifice. Never was there a merrier Christmas than that enjoyed by the principal characters of our life-sketch.

And such a "Merry Christmas!" dear reader, we wish you also may enjoy!

A MEMORIAL to Lord Palmerston is in course of signature throughout the various departments of the Civil Service, praying that the Saturday half-holiday may be made a universal instead of a partial institution therein. We have seen the document, and,

though not disapproving of the extension of the boon, cannot afford praise to the wording of the memorial. It is, indeed, an ungrammatical effusion, reflecting no credit upon the body in whose name it has been written, and very likely to elude a sharp criticism from the Premier. Possibly, indeed, his Lordship may agree to the prayer of the memorialists, on the ground that they may thus be afforded opportunities for making themselves better acquainted with the rules of composition. The first paragraph of the memorial sheweth that the frequent intervals of relaxation afforded by the Saturday half holiday has been found beneficial to the health and energies of those who follow sedentary occupation, and therefore advantageous to employers; that its observance has become almost universal in this metropolis; and in a similar style are thirteen or fourteen other paragraphs following it. The "officers and clerks" who have perpetrated this act of violation of the Queen's English would do well in not making the memorial public until it has been revised by some person better qualified than they appear to be for putting a plain and sensible request into plain and sensible language.

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

Let poet's rhyme of primrose time,

Of spring with all its flowers,

For me I'll raise no song of praise

For joys no longer ours:

My theme shall be that magic tree,

In light and splendor glowing,

Whose branches bear those gifts so rare,

Some Fairy's been bestowing.

The Christmas Tree! The Christmas Tree!

Come circle round it singing!

Let each advance and take their chance,

And see what Fate is bringing.

See, here are toys for laughing boys,

And dolls for little misses,

With rings and gloves for constant loves—

For pretty maidens—"kisses;"

Here, bracelets fine, with gems that shine,

And some not worth a penny;

You can't refuse, whichever you choose,

So take your chance of any.

The Christmas Tree! The Christmas Tree!

Come circle round it singing,

Let each advance and take their chance,

And see what Fate is bringing.

MEZAR THE MISER.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROBBERY.

Deeper and deeper her cheek is glowing,
Quicker and quicker her breath is flowing,
And her eye beams out from its long dark lashes
Fast and full, indignant flashes. *Praed.*

AFTER the freshest old Mezar kept the trunk containing his money, which he had contrived to save, with the aid of Calvin, in his chamber at the farmhouse. The circumstance had been noised about, as such things will be, at the time, and the trunk was said to contain a fabulous amount. But as time passed on, the affair was forgotten.

Great, therefore, was the astonishment of the villagers on awakening one fine morning to hear that Mezar's chamber had been entered the night before, his trunk broken open, and its contents abstracted, and that Orpha Angevine was accused of the robbery.

Old Mezar had made a great outcry on discovering his loss, though it was not much, as he had in the course of the year sent the greater part of his money to London, and only one thousand pounds remained in the trunk; and somehow, nobody knew exactly how it came about, though Mrs. Pinkerton had a faint idea that it came from Calvin Styphin, it was proposed to search Orpha's room. And notwithstanding Orpha's indignant protestations, it was carried into effect.

For a long time the search was unavailing, but at last, Calvin, the only one who would ever have thought of looking in such a place, found between the mattresses, ten twenty pound notes, and a locket attached to a black ribbon. Mezar immediately identified the property as his.

The honest farmer and his wife were greatly shocked at this discovery, and their faith in Orpha's innocence began to give way at this event.

"Orpha," said Jared Pinkerton, gravely, "this begins to look strange. What could have induced you to take the money?"

"Mr. Pinkerton," returned Orpha, proudly, "the money being found in my room is no proof that I did take it!"

"Oh, of course not," sneered Calvin. "She'll say next that somebody put it there, to make people think

she stole it. I shouldn't wonder if she said it was me, neither," he added exultingly.

"I do believe you did place those articles there, Calvin Styphin," returned Orpha, quickly.

"There, I told you so!" cried Calvin, triumphantly.

"Reptile! I know this is your work," she answered, thoroughly aroused; "but you shall not triumph over me so readily." Whereupon, she recounted to Mr. and Mrs. Pinkerton what had taken place between Calvin and herself on the river's bank.

"What do you say to that?" demanded Pinkerton, turning to Calvin.

"There ain't one word of truth in the whole of it," responded Calvin, unblushingly.

"Do you mean to say that Orpha would willingly be guilty of an untruth?" asked the farmer. "I cannot believe it."

"Believe it or not," returned Calvin, doggedly, "just as you've a mind to. But one thing I can tell you, you can't believe her!"

"Not believe Orpha!" interposed Dame Pinkerton, in a shrill treble. "When was she ever guilty of an untruth?"

"I'll tell you when, since you are so dreadful anxious to find out," returned Calvin, malignantly. Orpha trembled. She knew what was coming, and how feeble her shield was against the malice of her rejected suitor; yet the ordeal must be borne. "Shall I tell them, Orpha?" continued Calvin, with a speaking glance.

She understood it. One little motion of the eye, and he would be silent! but that motion would unite her life's destiny to a low, grovelling wretch. Sooner disgrace, ay, death itself, than such a fate as that!

"You can tell all you know, Calvin," answered Orpha, quietly. "You may have me driven in disgrace from my present home; but the world is wide, and innocence has never yet failed to find a shelter."

"Innocence!" snarled old Mezar, "rubbish! Every-body is innocent until they are found out."

The tide was setting strongly against Orpha.

Pinkerton looked bewildered. His naturally benevolent disposition inclined him strongly in favour of the girl, but a sense of justice demanded a thorough investigation of the affair; and if guilty, the girl must suffer for her crime.

"Let us look into this affair," he said, "and sift it to the bottom before we make it public. Orpha, there are certain passages in your life which, to speak mildly, look suspicious, but your general good conduct has caused us to overlook them. Now in this matter between you and young Linton—"

"That is just what I am going to tell you about," interrupted Calvin, perceiving that the last hope of bending Orpha to his will was gone, and determined to push matters to extremity. "She deceived us all in that affair."

"How deceived us?"

"Why, Willis Linton was no more her husband than I am!"

This assertion astonished them all, but none so much as Mezar Pinkerton.

"Not married to Willis Linton?" cried Mrs. Pinkerton, in great surprise and indignation. "Is that so, Orpha?"

"It is," she answered, calmly. "I never said he was my husband."

"Oh, shameless girl!" cried Mrs. Pinkerton, raising her hands in holy horror,

"Oh!" howled old Mezar, clutching at his thin, gray locks viciously. "Oh! she has swindled me out of ten thousand pounds!"

Calvin triumphed. No further questions were asked Orpha, and she felt how impossible it would be to attempt to explain the motives which had led her to deceive them in the matter of Willis Linton.

Like many other noble actions in this world, it received a vile return. It is fortunate that virtue is its own reward, for it seldom gets any other. But she was not prepared for the construction which was placed upon her conduct.

In admitting her deception in that particular instance, she brought discredit upon the whole story of her life; and to her surprise and grief she now perceived that her marriage was looked upon as an invention, and she was merely regarded as the paramour of Willis Linton. In order to save his good name (this was old Mezar's interpretation), she had pretended to be his wife in order to obtain the papers, and had robbed him a second time to supply the extravagancies of the partner of her shame.

So Calvin was sent for the constable, and Orpha was given in charge and taken before Squire Maple, for an examination.

Squire Maple examined Orpha before committing her to the county gaol for trial. He was a tall, raw-boned, weather-beaten man, nearly sixty years of age, but hale and hearty withal; and his honest, sun-burnt features had a look of shrewd common sense.

He seated himself in an arm-chair in his little room, the windows of which were shaded by creeping rose bushes and honeysuckles, and Orpha and her

accusers—for such they all were now—stood around him, whilst the constable placed the stolen property on the table before the magistrate.

All others, except the party interested, were excluded from the room, so that there was present at the examination only the squire, Farmer Pinkerton and his wife, Mezar, Calvin, the constable, and the accused Orpha.

Old Mezar was first called upon for his testimony, and stated that his trunk had been opened by means of a false key, and one thousand pounds and a golden locket stolen from it. The other contents of the trunk had been unmolested.

Were the other contents of value? was asked him, and he replied that they were. Bonds, stocks, and mortgages.

"You suspect the girl called Orpha Angevine to be the culprit?" asked Squire Maple.

"To the best of my knowledge and belief," returned Mezar.

But upon being questioned further as to his reasons for suspecting the girl to be the thief, he could not give any satisfactory reply.

He mumbled something about her room adjoining his, rambling off into the story of Willis Linton and the acceptances, until he finally became so confused that the squire was obliged to call upon Jared Pinkerton for an explanation, and the farmer told the story of Orpha's deception.

Mrs. Pinkerton corroborated this story, and Calvin testified to the finding of the money and locket.

Mr. and Mrs. Pinkerton confirmed this evidence, and the case against Orpha was closed.

"What do you say to all this, girl?" demanded the squire, turning to the accused.

Orpha began by protesting her innocence, and her entire ignorance of the manner in which the money came to be concealed in her room, related without any restraint her interview with Calvin, his obscure threat, and her belief that he had committed the robbery, and placed the money where it was found, to work her ruin.

Then she revealed her motives for the deceit in passing for the wife of Willis Linton, and what, in her belief, had caused old Mezar to relinquish the acceptances—spoke of the certificate of deposit, and her suspicion that Mezar Pinkerton was in some way connected with Lathrop Moneymont, the London broker.

Her story was told modestly, but succinctly, and the old squire heard her patiently and attentively to the end, and nodded his head approvingly when she had finished.

All the time that she was speaking the squire was turning over the golden locket in his hands, and glancing at it occasionally through his gold-rimmed spectacles.

"You say this property is yours?" he demanded of Mezar, when Orpha had finished. "This locket and these ten twenty-pound notes?"

"They are mine—I know them by the numbers," answered Mezar, readily.

"Have you any other proof?" asked the squire.

Mezar pondered, scratched his head in bewilderment, but was finally obliged to acknowledge that he had not.

"The locket, of course, you can identify without any trouble?" suggested the squire.

Old Mezar was ready to take his oath that the locket was his.

"Then how happened it," continued the squire, springing the locket open, and exhibiting a portrait which it contained, "that this locket engraven with the name of Orpha Angevine, and containing her portrait, was in your possession?"

Old Mezar seemed utterly confounded by this question, and turned as many colours as the dying dolphin.

"Let me see it," he stammered; and with trembling hands he took his old spectacles from their case, and affixed them to his nose. He clutched the locket, and examined it eagerly. "Orpha Angevine," he muttered, as he deciphered the name. "I thought it was the other. The very devil seems to aid this girl."

"Well," asked the squire, "do you claim this locket?"

"No," answered Mezar, at once. "My sight grows bad from age, and its similarity to mine deceived me. It is not mine."

"I thought as much. Here, girl, do you know this locket?" And he passed it to Orpha.

"It was my mother's!" cried Orpha, as she gazed upon it, pressing it reverentially to her lips. "It is my mother's portrait—not mine."

For the first time during the examination the squire betrayed an emotion of surprise.

"Then all I can say is, that you are wonderfully like your mother," he rejoined, pleasantly. "Keep the locket, it evidently belongs to you; and, for that matter, the money also."

And he pushed the money towards her.

"What, give her my money? Let the thief go?" shrieked old Mezar, in dismay.

"Softly, softly," replied Squire Maple, with sternness; "no hard words, Mr. Pinkerton. You have failed to identify either the locket or the money, and I have only your word that a robbery has really been committed in your premises. You have failed entirely to substantiate the charge, and therefore I shall dismiss the accused, who, to the best of my knowledge, has been guilty only of putting too much trust in man—a crime of more or less veniality from different standpoints. At all events, I am not called upon to act in any regard to that. But on the charge of robbery I most emphatically discharge her, as the evidence against her does not warrant a committal."

"I will appeal against your decision," cried old Mezar. "There is law in the land—it cannot be violated with impunity!"

"You can do as you please, of course," answered the squire, deliberately; "but I would not advise you to do anything of the kind. The whole affair has very much the appearance of a conspiracy, and you had better let it rest where it is. With me the affair has ended. You lost, you say, one thousand pounds—here are only two hundred; and you cannot prove that these two hundred are a part of your one thousand. The locket you have acknowledged you were mistaken in claiming as yours. So I restore both to the girl, no other claimant appearing, and dismiss the case."

With these unsatisfactory words, he dismissed them.

Mezar grumbled excessively, Calvin looked as if he had eaten something that disagreed with him, and Mr. and Mrs. Pinkerton looked blankly at each other in a state of utter bewilderment.

Squire Maple detained Orpha, to exchange a few words with her.

She wished to return the gold, assuring him that it was none of hers.

"Keep it, my child," he said, kindly. "If the truth were known, I think it is fairly yours, and you need have no compunction in using it. Besides, you will need it; for I know you will have no wish to remain in Fallowfield after what has happened. Go, seek your betrayer, and make him do you that justice you deserve."

Poor Orpha!

Even the good, kind-hearted old squire believed her guilty of woman's greatest sin.

She sent a boy to the farm for the box which contained her few worldly possessions, and took the noon train for London; turning her back, as she fondly hoped, upon Fallowfield for ever.

When they arrived at the farm, old Mezar took Calvin aside, and offered him one half of the eight hundred pounds if he would restore it.

But Calvin stoutly denied that he had committed the robbery, and insisted that Orpha was the true culprit, who, thanks to the stupidity of Squire Maple, had escaped with the money.

Old Mezar pretended to be satisfied; but that night he wrote to London for a detective.

Before the man could arrive, however, Calvin received, or pretended to receive, a message that an aunt of his was very ill at Saybrook, and he must go to her at once.

At the expiration of two days, he wrote back that he should return to the farm no more; that his aunt had died and left him a little money, and he was going to London to seek his fortunes.

Old Mezar grinned fiercely at this intelligence, and despatched the detective to London, whence he also soon followed.

CHAPTER VIII.

BACK TO LONDON.

"Oh!" she saith, "my spirit doth seem
To have risen to-day from a hideous dream—
A long, long dream—but I feel it breaking.
Faintly sweet is the throb of waking."

So then she laughed and wept again;
While gazing on her heart's first rain.
Bound in his turn by a magic chain.

The silent youth stood there.
Never had either been so blest!
You that are young may picture the rest,
You that are young and fair.

ORPHA's motive in going to London was, in the first instance, to call upon Willis Linton and see if he could not obtain some situation for her, where, being unknown, she could earn her living and pass her days in comparative peace.

She had no difficulty in finding him, as he had given her his directions, and she walked at once to the office of Redtape.

She found Willis at his desk, hard at work, and he was delighted to see her. He took her into the private office, so that they could have a quiet chat without being disturbed.

"You see, Orpha," said Willis, gaily, "I have kept the promise I made to you. I have been very studious

and circumspect in the past year, and I am about to benefit by it. Redtape will present my name, and I expect to be admitted to the bar in about a week. And when I am admitted to practice, Orpha, I want you to be my first client."

"I your client?" demanded Orpha, in surprise.

"Why, how could that be?"

"Very simply. You have a very nice case, I assure you; and if I should happen to gain it for you, the success would be of great service to me, coming as it would upon the very threshold of my career as a lawyer. I want you to authorize me to commence proceedings against Lathrop Moneymont and Mezar Pinkerton, for the recovery of the ten thousand pounds deposited by your father in the hands of the former. I'll pay the costs if I do not succeed; but if I do, I shall expect a handsome fee. Will you consent to this?"

"With all my heart," answered Orpha, readily. She began to realize that her bread cast upon the waters was returning to her tenfold; that in Willis Linton she had secured a firm friend.

"Now tell me what brings you here?" he asked. She briefly recounted her story, and her object in coming to London.

"A plain case," he replied. "The robbery was undoubtedly a conspiracy to ruin you; but whether old Mezar was a party to it, or it was solely undertaken by Calvin Stylphim, I am unable to say. Thanks to the shrewd honesty of Squire Maple—a worthy old man—you are two hundred pounds better off by the transaction. I do not know how old Mezar chanced to have your mother's portrait in his possession. There is a mystery in that which time only can develop; and when the veil is removed, we shall find that Mezar Pinkerton is at the bottom of all the misfortunes which have befallen your family and yourself in the years gone by. And that mystery is just what I hope to elucidate in our case of *Angevine versus Pinkerton*. Now, in regard to yourself. There is still a standing offer awaiting your acceptance."

"I understand," returned Orpha, constrainedly; "but I beg you will not press the subject. Something tells me that my husband is still alive, and that we shall shortly meet."

Linton bowed, in token of acquiescence. He understood her feelings, and respected them.

"A client of ours," he went on to say, "the rich banker, Jacob Goldschmidt—a Jew, by the way, was in here the other day, and I heard him ask Redtape if he knew of any nice young girl—poor, but of good family, and a tolerable education,—that he could obtain as a companion for his only daughter, Samuella. Now if Mr. Goldschmidt has not supplied his want, do you think that would suit you?"

"The very thing," answered Orpha at once.

"I thought so. Now I will give you, the direction of a nice, quiet boarding house, where you can remain for a day or two until I ascertain whether the situation is available or not. There is one thing upon which I will take the liberty to counsel you, though perhaps it may not be necessary. Never speak of your past history, or allude to your marriage in any manner. The banker would prefer a single woman. There will be no harm that I can see in leading him to imagine that you are such. An innocent deception that cannot possibly injure any one, and may be of service to you; for, to look upon you, no one would ever imagine that you had been married."

Poor Orpha! always doomed to practise some deceit—the innocent victim of circumstances—what could she do but yield? So it was fixed upon in that way, and she took her departure. Everything happened as Willis hoped and expected; and in a week's time Orpha was domiciled in a handsome house, as the companion and attendant of Miss Samuella Goldschmidt, a German Jew, who carried on a banking establishment in the City, and who was reputed to be worth a million.

Having seen Orpha comfortably settled, let us follow the footsteps of Mezar Pinkerton, and see what has become of him. Like Orpha, he had left Fallowfield for good; intending to take up his permanent residence in London.

The robbery at the farm, and the events immediately succeeding, had much to do with this decision. He became conscious that his money would no longer be safe, and the discovery of the locket containing the portrait of Orpha's mother, which had been so strangely selected from the half-dozen which his trunk contained—received at different times as security—made his heart sink with apprehension as he trembled upon the verge of a discovery, which would have consigned him to a felon's cell, and confiscated the wealth to gain which he had risked his immortal soul. He had a suspicion that Squire Maple had a glimmering of the secret which had baffled all eyes for so many years; for cunning ever fears straightforward honesty—so he determined to throw him off the scent by leaving Fallowfield.

Having occasion now to trace his course, we look him up, and find him in earnest conference with the sleek, bald-headed gentleman, who was, indeed, as Orphea had surmised, Mr. Lathrop Moneyment.

Great was the astonishment of Mr. Moneyment as old Mezard toddled into his office, and sank breathlessly into a chair.

In answer to his agent's inquiries, Mezard gave him an account of the circumstances which had led to his sudden appearance in London.

"You will have to pay that certificate of deposit yet," observed Mr. Moneyment, when his principal had finished, with a grave shake of the head. "That girl is sharp; and if she should happen to put the matter into the hands of a smart lawyer—and I wonder she has not done so before now—I don't see very well how we could escape it."

"No danger," growled Mezard; "but we'll fix her. She is here in London somewhere, and will probably go into service. We must trace her, spread her story, and have her driven away in disgrace, as she was at Fallowfield."

"With two hundred pounds of your money," laughed the other.

Old Mezard gnashed his teeth.

"Not bad that, for a country magistrate. Old Squire Mayo is evidently a believer in 'poetical justice.' That was turning the tables with a vengeance. But as for this lout Calvin, I think we shall catch him, if, as you say, Grasp the detective is on his track, and make him disgorge. Strange you should have lost that locket. I thought you destroyed it years ago."

"I hadn't the heart to," whined Mezard; "it was such good gold. And, who knows, David may come back some day."

"Never!" said Moneyment, with assurance. "He lies at the bottom of the sea."

"Do you ever dream, Lathrop?" asked Mezard, sinking his voice to a low whisper.

"Sometimes. Why do you ask?"

"Because I do; and dreadful dreams they are, too. And in them I see David Angevine standing before me, with a threatening look upon his face; and when I turn my head away upon the other side, I see the pale face of his wife, and a curse seems to issue from her pale lips. Do you ever see them in your dreams, Lathrop?"

"Never. Tush! don't make me think you are getting into your second childhood, Mr. Pinkerton," returned Lathrop, rather scornfully. "I have something else to think of, without troubling the ghosts of the past. And I have something in view now, which I was going to write to you about, and which you have arrived just in time to participate in."

"A speculation?" asked Mezard, pricking up his ears, and all his morbid fancies vanishing.

"Yes, and a good one, too—requiring an outlay of two or three thousand, with a certainty of realizing two or three hundred thousand."

"A very good speculation," rejoined Mezard, rubbing his hands softly together. "What is the outline?"

"I must inflict a short domestic history upon you, to explain. In the first place, you must know that there was a few years ago, a rich merchant here, of the name of Carsten, engaged in the East India trade. He had two sons, Percy and Wilner. There was only a difference of a year and a half between the two boys. I mention this, as the fact is important. Being so nearly of an age, it was difficult to tell which was the elder; and, moreover, they greatly resembled each other, having more than the similarity common in families."

"Percy was the first born, a sober, steady young man; whilst his brother, Wilner, was idle, dissolute, and unreliable in all the relations of life."

"Wilner mortally offended his father in some way. I have never been able to ascertain exactly what the offence was; but he became involved in some disgraceful transaction, and the old gentleman, his father, determined to send him out of the country until it was hushed up."

"He had a vessel then in port, all ready to sail for Calcutta; and as Percy, who had just graduated at the college from which Wilner had been expelled, wished to see a little of the world before settling down into a quiet mercantile life, his brother was placed in his charge, and the young men sailed together."

"At the expiration of three years, Wilner returned alone. Percy, he said, had become enraptured with the country during the several journeys they had made into the interior of Asia, had engaged in various speculations, and was in a fair way to make an immense fortune. Wilner had tried his hand several times, on capital furnished by his brother, and failing each time, had become disgusted and returned to London. Percy expected to remain out there a couple of years longer."

"An event had transpired during the absence of the boys that neither had expected or looked forward to. That was the death of their father. He had been buried

six months when Wilner arrived home. When his will was examined, it was found that the great bulk of his property had been left to Percy. A yearly annuity of one thousand pounds, payable quarterly, was all Wilner received. Even on his death-bed his father feared to trust him. And he was to forfeit even that if he ever acknowledged a girl of humble extraction, with whom he had formed an intimacy, as his wife. You can readily imagine that Wilner was furious at this intelligence. One thousand pounds a year was not enough for his luxurious habits. He only wished that Percy was there to do him justice. Percy, he said, would break the will and give him a fair half. There is no doubt that Percy would have done so; for notwithstanding the difference in their characters, a warm affection had ever existed between the brothers, and they were never known to quarrel."

"Wishes were unavailing, however, as Percy was not there. Almost any one else in a like situation would have quietly awaited the course of events; not so Wilner. A child in character and stability—the mere slave of his passions and impulses, he began a career of dissipation worse than any he had hitherto pursued. This course alienated him from all respectable society, and he soon disappeared from among his friends, making his home in the haunts of the vicious and depraved."

"I obtained all these facts from him at different times when he has been here to borrow money. About a week ago he told me something that he has set me thinking. He has received a letter from India, written by a friend of his brother, informing him that Percy Carsten, whilst traversing a part of Afghanistan, was killed by some Turkomans who attacked the caravan. He submitted the letter to my inspection, and I have no doubt the intelligence is true. Here was a windfall for the spendthrift; but every argument I could use would not persuade him to claim the property as his brother's heir. It would be of no use, he said; they would contrive to keep it from him somehow. When I asked him what he intended to do about it, he replied, nothing. He should say nothing and do nothing, but leave them to find out the intelligence the best way they could."

"She ought to know it, though," he observed, thoughtfully.

"She—who?" I asked.

"O, did I never tell you? Why, you must know that my father and Jacob Goldschmidt the banker were great friends, and it was arranged between them years ago, when Percy and Samuella were children, that they should unite their children in marriage when they came of age. A regular contract was drawn up between them, and a certain settlement on either side stated, and Percy and Samuella have been brought up to regard it as a fixed fact. I question if there will be much love lost in the affair, but that doesn't matter. I married for love, and what did I make of it?"

"You married?" I asked, quickly, as I remembered the clause in his annuity. He grew morose and taciturn at once.

"I was as good as married," he said, in a guilty, bewildered kind of way, and that was all I could get out of him on the subject. I scarcely think, however, that he was ever legally married. Noticing his reserve, I did not press the matter. Cautioning him to observe a profound silence as to his brother's death, as it might lead to something greatly to his benefit, I lent him the one hundred pounds he had come after, and he took his departure."

"But the speculation?" granted Mezard, a little impatiently.

"I am coming to it. I have told you how much these two brothers resembled each other, and how near their ages were. Percy, the heir to his father's vast property, is dead; and Wilner, lost and almost forgotten by his former associates, remains. Now what so easy as to get this Wilner, dress him up, and pass him off as Percy returned? Who would detect the cheat? Wilner then marries Samuella and receives her dowry, and is put in possession of his father's property. Of course he would come down handsomely to those who would thus help him to a million of money."

"A very nice speculation," affirmed Mezard, reflectively; "and might be worked to advantage, and no risk on our side, except the few thousands spoken of, if the young man could be depended on to carry out his part; but from your description of him, I am afraid he has not sufficient nerve to carry it through."

"I have thought of that, and we must furnish him with a companion, some one that we can depend upon, to attend him constantly, and keep an eye upon his every motion. A supposed friend, a wealthy, middle-aged man, whose acquaintance has been made in a romantic manner in India—with an easy, polished address, and a facility for telling good stories."

"Have you selected such a man?"

"I have."

"Who is he?"

"Thurston Hollansbee," returned Moneyment, with a significant smile.

"He will do," rejoined Mezard, with an answering smile. "Now we must have this young man here and arrange matters."

(To be continued.)

ALL ALONE.

By E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH,
Author of "The Hidden Hand," "Self-Made," &c., &c.

CHAPTER LXIX.

AN HUMBLE FRIEND AT NEED.

I am not of that harsh and morose temper, As some proud ones are taxed with; who suppose They part from the respect due to their honours If they use not such as follow them, Without distinction of their hearts, as slaves.

Massinger.

From this time Gladdys ceased to fast; but she restricted herself to a very severe regimen—hard biscuits bought from the baker; oysters eaten from the shell; eggs boiled in the shell; apples, oranges, nuts; and pure water drawn from the spout over her own wash-stand. Ennis waited on her, bringing her all these things.

Mrs. Llewellyn did not interfere with this arrangement. She bided her time, waiting for a more favourable opportunity of once more getting the will as well as the person of her captive in her power.

Ennis was a great help to her young mistress just at this time.

And Gladdys fully appreciated the girl's services.

Holy writ informs us that there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. And our daily experience assures us that the smallest favour from a supposed enemy makes a deeper impression upon the receiver than does the greatest service from a known friend.

In the one case it is a matter of course, and does not surprise us. In the other it is an unexpected event, and astonishes us. Thus, Gladdys felt more grateful to her gaoler, Ennis, for slight favours rendered during a temporary fit of compunction, than she had ever felt to her faithful servant, Alice, for the devotion of a life.

And this gratitude she continually expressed in every look and tone when communicating with her attendant.

Perhaps one of the best elements in a good action is its reproductiveness. Thus, Ennis, having rendered one good service to her young mistress, felt disposed to follow it up with a second. So, one morning, while helping the young lady to dress, she said:

"Miss Gladdys, if there is anything in the world that you want done, and that I can do, without making missus angry and losing my place, I am willing to do it for you."

"Thank you, Ennis; there is one thing to begin with, that I wish you to do—to cease calling me Miss Gladdys. I am not Miss Gladdys, but Mrs. Arthur Powis. I have been a wife and mother, and I require to be addressed by my married name and title," she answered gently.

Ennis stared a little, but answered:

"Yes, ma'am, I will remember. Now, ma'am, is there anything else?"

"No."

"I was thinking, ma'am, as how, as long as you've been used to having of your tea and coffee regular all your life, it might hurt your health to keep on doing without them. And so, ma'am, if you would please to trust me, I could make coffee or tea and bring it to you myself, so as you may be sure as there'll not be any of that physic in it as you are so afraid of. Shall I?"

"No, Ennis; no, I thank you," she replied.

"I hope you don't suspect me, ma'am?" inquired the girl, with a troubled look.

"No, I do not. But a cup of coffee or tea might be drugged in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, while your back was turned. You couldn't keep your eyes always upon it, even if you had eyes like Argus, all around your head. No, Ennis, I must practice a little self-denial to save my integrity," said Gladdys, firmly.

"Oh, ma'am! do you rarely and truly think as my missus would do anything like that?" inquired the girl, who, as I have often said, was only partly in the confidence of her employer, and who never could decide for herself whether the fears of Gladdys were or were not well founded.

"I would rather not speak of this," said the young lady.

And the conversation then ceased.

In proportion as Gladdys recovered from the effects of the drug that had been administered to her, she grew more keenly intelligent upon the subject of her

situation and more painfully sensitive to its sufferings.

From the morning upon which she had seen that mysterious workman in the church, she cherished a hope that he would re-appear and prove to be Arthur Powis. But as day followed day without bringing to pass any such event, her suspense became agonizing.

Mrs. Llewellyn did not keep her promise of finding out that workman and bringing him to the presence of Gladys to convince her of her mistake; nor did she seek to account for the non-fulfilment of that promise. At this period she evaded inquiry by avoiding the presence of her captive.

When Gladys could bear the agony of uncertainty no longer, she called Ennis to her presence, and said:

"Ennis, you offered me your services a few days ago. I accept them now. Oh, Ennis! tell me if you have ever seen that man who bears so strong a resemblance to my husband—so strong a resemblance, Ennis, that I cannot help believing him to be Lieutenant Powis himself—although Mrs. Jay declares him to be only a workman. Say, have you seen him Ennis?"

"Yes, ma'am, but not lately; not for more than a fortnight; but I have seen him close, and know he is only a workman, and not Master Arthur," replied the girl, confidently.

"You know this, Ennis? How should you know it?" inquired Gladys, with surprise and distrust.

"Because, ma'am, I found out all about him. For when Missus first saw him pass the house and noticed him, she was troubled by his likeness to Master Arthur, too."

"Oh! she was?"

"Yes, ma'am; and she sent me to ask about him on the sly; and I found out everything."

"What did you find out?"

"I had better begin and tell you all about it, straight through," said the girl.

"Do so, Ennis," answered the young lady.

And Ennis told the whole story of her researches into the life of William Simmons, the stonemason's labourer.

At the end of the narrative, Gladys said:

"I think you have told me the truth, as far as you know it; but, Ennis, I am less convinced and more dissatisfied than ever. You have lost all trace of him, you say?"

"Yes, ma'am—ever since that Saturday."

"Well, then, Ennis, I wish you to do something for me, if you can do it without getting yourself into trouble."

"What is it, ma'am?"

"I wish you to go to that street where we went on Tuesday, and to a half-finished building opposite the church where I was to have been married, and inquire among the workmen there for the man named William Simmons. And, if possible, get speech of the man. You will then find out for a certainty whether he is really whom I suspect him to be. If he is, give him this letter, Ennis, and it will bring him to my side in an hour. And, Ennis, you shall be rewarded for this good service beyond your utmost hopes. Can you do this?"

"Yes, ma'am; for I have got to go up in that very part of the town on a message for my missus."

In an hour from this time the girl went on her double errand.

Gladys passed the interval of her absence in the most intolerable suspense.

It was near sunset when Ennis returned to the house; and it was quite sunset before she got leisure to come to Gladys's room.

"Well! well!" breathlessly gasped Gladys, as the girl opened the door.

"Well, ma'am, here is your letter," answered Ennis, very gravely.

"You did not see him—or you found him to be not whom I hoped."

"I did not see him; he—he—"

"What? what?"

"Well, he wasn't Master Arthur Powis, ma'am; so I hope you won't be very much shocked when you hear it; but—but—"

"But—oh, what? Speak, Ennis, for heaven's sake!" exclaimed Gladys, extremely alarmed by the manner of the girl.

"Well, ma'am; indeed, it is nothing to disturb you, seeing he wasn't Mr. Arthur Powis, although it do seem very dreadful to happen to any one—"

"Oh, Ennis! can't you tell me what it is that has happened?" cried Gladys, clasping her hands.

"Well, ma'am—but, please, don't take on; because, indeed, he was truly nothing but a workman. Well, so, when I went there and asked about him, the other men all looked troubled, and looked at one another, and didn't answer."

The girl panted.

Gladys said not a word, but her clasped hands, and imploring eyes, were more eloquent than words, in entreaty for her attendant to go on.

"Then," continued Ennis, "the foreman came and asked me if I was anything to the young man. And I told him no, nothing at all, only we had used to see him go by, and hadn't seen him lately. Oh! then he looked more confident, and he told me—he told me that—Oh! ma'am, don't be shocked—"

"Ennis, Ennis, go on!"

"He told me that, the very same day of the marriage that was to be, on last Tuesday afternoon, Billy Simmons—"

"Yes, yes!" The clasped hands began to writhe and twist, and the imploring eyes to start and dilate.

"Oh, ma'am! don't look that-a-way, or I shall never dare to tell you."

"Tell me, or you will kill me!"

"Billy Simmons was at work on a scaffolding up before the third story, and he made a mis-step, and—oh! remember he wasn't Master Arthur, indeed he wasn't—he fell to the ground and was instantly killed."

"Oh, Ennis!"

And Gladys sank back in her chair and covered her face with her hands.

"He wasn't anybody but Billy Simmons; indeed he wasn't, Miss Glad—I mean, Mrs. Powis."

Gladys did not reply, nor remove her hands.

"I found that out to a dead certainty; because when I asked where they had buried him, they told me that he was took home to his mother, who was a widow woman, and buried from her house; but they didn't know where. And no more didn't they know where he lived. But, Miss Gladys, it all proves that he couldn't have been Master Arthur, as he was so well known to be what he was."

"I suppose you are right," said Gladys, shuddering.

"And oh! I must try and not go crazy with all this. Ennis, when things of this kind occur they are put in the daily papers. Go out to the nearest newspaper agency, and bring me all the papers of last Wednesday," said Gladys, trying very hard to compose her agitated nerves.

Ennis went out, and soon returned with the *Times*, being the only paper of that date she could procure.

Gladys seized it, and, after a diligent search, she found the item she was looking for—a small paragraph of a few lines:

"Shocking accident! A labourer, named William Simmons, while at work upon the new buildings in progress opposite St. Asaph's Church, fell from a scaffolding on the third story, and was instantly killed. His body was taken home to his mother, a poor widow, residing in the neighbourhood."

That was all.

Gladys read the item and laid the paper down, with a sigh of mingled pity and relief, as she said:

"Poor man and poor mother! Well, Ennis, I suppose you were right. Indeed, I know you were right; for, if this poor man was killed, it proves to me that he could not have been Lieutenant Powis. I feel so sure that my husband still lives! So sure!"

Gladys was half right and half wrong, and so was Ennis, and so were the workmen on the building, and the reporters of the newspapers.

Could Gladys have seen a short paragraph in the next morning's—Thursday morning's paper!

It was this:

"ERRATUM.—The labourer, William Simmons, stated in our issue of yesterday to have met his death by a fall from a scaffolding near the top of a building opposite St. Asaph's Church, was not really killed, as reported, but stunned, and very badly injured. He is lying in the hospital, at the point of death."

Gladys never saw this paragraph. But more of this in future.

Gladys kept to her regimen of oysters, fruits, nuts, &c. And her health did not suffer from the deprivation of her usual beverages. On the contrary, as soon as she was relieved from suspense on the subject of the unfortunate workman, her youth and good constitution asserted themselves in her daily improving health.

With her returning health of mind and body came thoughts of escape from the thralldom of her guardian. She knew, when she thought it all over, that she could not openly defy Mrs. Llewellyn's authority. She was still a minor, and that lady was her guardian. She was a wife, it is true; but she had no means of proving her wifehood while in a state of bondage. To prove her marriage, she must first regain her liberty. To regain her liberty she must make her escape before the family removed to Cader Idris.

Day after day Gladys pondered over the ways and means of effecting her purpose. She had plenty of ready money, for Mrs. Llewellyn made a great virtue of paying her regularly every quarter the liberal sum

that her father had allowed her for pocket-money during her minority, or her single life. And she had much valuable jewellery, all very portable, and easily convertible into cash. Altogether, she had enough to escape with, and to live decently upon for a few months.

She determined to try to purchase the help of Ennis. One night, when Ennis had assisted her to undress, she broached the subject.

"Ennis, how much does Mrs. Jay give you a month for guarding and waiting on me?"

"Two pounds, and many handsome presents of shawls and dresses and such."

"Whom do you really consider your mistress—Mrs. Jay or myself?"

"Well, ma'am, she pays me my wages; but my business is to wait on you. So I can't tell."

"Ennis, the only claim you think Mrs. Jay has on you, then, is the wages she pays you?"

"Yes, ma'am, I suppose that is about it."

"But suppose you are paid out of my money?"

"Then, madam, if paid out of your money for serving you, I must be your servant, and not missus's."

"I should think so, Ennis," said the young lady, falling into thought. Soon she broke the silence again. And it was to make a confidant of Ennis.

It was the misfortune of this poor young lady that in her bitter extremity, sequestered as she was from intercourse with all other human creatures, and exposed to the basest machinations against her sanity, honour and peace, to be obliged to confide her plans to, and beg assistance from, this humble instrument.

So she commenced and related the oft-repeated history of her wrongs and sorrows—her parent's death; her lover's absence; her guardian's treachery; and then her imprisonment, her escape, her marriage, and re-capture.

"You know all the rest, Ennis," she said; "for when I was taken to Cader Idris I found you there."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Now, Ennis, the question is—will you help me to escape from this cruel captivity, in which I am exposed to such constant danger? I do not wish to bribe you, Ennis. Heaven knows I would not willingly bribe any one's servant, even in my extremity. But I do not consider you Mrs. Llewellyn's servant, but mine. I know that what I wish you to do is right; but I also know that by doing it you will risk or lose Mrs. Llewellyn's favour; therefore, Ennis, I tell you, not in bribery but in justice, that I will remunerate your services—so well that you shall never regret Mrs. Llewellyn."

Poor Gladys looked pleadingly up in the face of her keeper, who cast her eyes thoughtfully on the floor.

"Will you assist me to escape, Ennis?"

"Tell me right out what you want me to do, ma'am. And then, if I can't do it, at least I can hold my tongue and not tell Mrs. Llewellyn," said Ennis.

Gladys sighed, and then said:

"I wish you to do simply this: In the dead of night—say this night, or to-morrow night, or any other that we may fix upon—I wish you just to open the doors and let me out."

"Oh, ma'am! you would be insulted, or robbed, or murdered, or something, in this wicked city."

"No; for you must have a cab waiting for me around the corner."

"Where would you go, ma'am?"

"Straight to the railway station, and sit in the cab until the office should be opened, and then I would take a ticket for the early train, and be half-way to Scotland before my cruel enemy should have discovered my absence. Will you do this for me Ennis?"

"Oh, ma'am, if I was, and if my missus was to find it out, she would turn me out of doors neck and heels!" said the girl, with a half-willing and half-frightened look.

"I know she would, Ennis; and therefore I propose to pay you liberally. Ennis, I have saved up fifteen hundred pounds from my allowance of pocket-money; because, in truth, for the last year I have had few opportunities of spending money. I will give you five hundred pounds as a guarantee against any loss you may suffer through serving me!"

The eyes of Ennis expanded with surprise and brightened with pleasure.

Gladys saw this, and went on to say:

"Nor is that all, Ennis; nor a tithe of what I will do to reward you for helping me to regain my liberty. In very little more than a year from this I shall be of age. I shall then be the mistress of Cader Idris and all its vast dependencies, with one of the largest private revenues in the whole country. I will then take you into my service at double your present wages, or I will pay you down a thousand pounds as a marriage dowry if you wish to marry, or capital to begin business upon if you wish to keep a shop. Will you assist me, Ennis?"

"Yes, ma'am, I will; but I daren't stop back here

and face missus after all's done. She'd murder me. Can't you take me along with you ma'am?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, Ennis—gladly!" exclaimed her young mistress, catching eagerly at the idea.

"I have got to go down and get my supper now, ma'am, if you please, because missus is awful particular about hours in the kitchen."

"I know she is. Very well, Ennis! After supper, come up again, and we will talk further of this."

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE ESCAPE OF GLADDYS.

Out of this nettle danger
I will pluck the flower safety.

Shakespeare.

THAT night, when all the rest of the household were gone to bed, Gladdys and her attendant sat arranging their plans for flight. Ennis begged to stipulate for a day or two, to smuggle her own wardrobe out of the house and into the care of an acquaintance she had picked up in the neighbourhood.

And Gladdys unwillingly consented to the delay. For herself, she had but little to take away, as far as bulk was concerned; her money and jewels, a comb and brush, and a single change of clothes were all that she required for her journey. These were easily packed in a small leather bag, that she herself could carry in her hand. The escape was arranged to take place on the Friday night following—thus allowing Ennis three whole days to prepare. Having settled this, Ennis arose and curtied, and bade her mistress a respectful good-night.

So intent had Gladdys been upon the one point of her escape from the house, that she had not cast a glance at anything beyond that. She had at once resolved to go to Scotland, because she knew Scotland better than any other place, and also because she had vague hopes that her friends, the three old maiden sisters, would protect her, and perhaps help her to prove her marriage and secure her liberty; and that they might even possibly be able to give her some information about Arthur. She resolved, then, on going to Scotland, to go at once to "Ceres Cottage," or as the poor old ladies called it "Serious Cottage," and throw herself upon their protection. She did not deem it necessary, however, to confide this part of her plan to her servant.

The interval between this day, Monday, and the day of flight, Friday, was passed by Gladdys in the usual dull routine of her restricted life.

Even her preparations for the journey afforded but little variety; for they occupied less than half-an-hour.

Friday came—a splendid autumn day, a very herald of freedom and happiness. But it seemed very, very long to Gladdys.

In the evening Mrs. Llewellyn surprised her with a visit, the first visit that lady had deigned to pay her ward for more than a week.

"Well," said Gladdys, mockingly, "have you come to keep your promise, and to bring me news of that strange workman, whom you assured me that you would seek out and bring to my presence?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Llewellyn, much to the surprise of Gladdys. "I have come to bring you news of that man, and to set your heart at rest for ever on the subject, I hope."

And she drew from her pocket the very identical copy of the *Times* that Ennis had purchased for Gladdys more than a week before, and that had accidentally fallen into the hands of Mrs. Llewellyn. Gladdys knew it by a particular stain of ink on the corner.

"Yes," continued the lady, "by the merest chance I picked up this paper, which is more than a week old, and my eyes were caught by this notice—"

And here she handed the paper to Gladdys, and pointed out the paragraph falsely relating the death of William Simmons.

Gladdys read it quietly, as if she had never seen it before; and then she laid the paper aside.

"You are satisfied now I hope?" said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Quite," replied Gladdys. "I am glad of it. But I did not come here only to tell you of that troublesome fellow's fate. I came to say that we are to start for Cader Idris on Monday."

"Very well," said Gladdys.

"Shall you be ready?"

"To go to Cader Idris? I will see."

"Well, whether you are ready or not, I start for Cader Idris on Monday, and you accompany me."

Good-night," said Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Good-night," returned Gladdys.

In going out, Mrs. Llewellyn met Ennis coming in.

"Ennis, you are to have Miss Gladdys's wardrobe packed up to go to Cader Idris on Monday morning; do you hear?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Mind you do it."

"Yes, ma'am."

Mrs. Llewellyn was gone, and Ennis stood in her place.

"I hope and trust that was the very last I shall ever see of that evil woman," said Gladdys, speaking more to herself than to her attendant.

"Now, ma'am," whispered Ennis, approaching her young lady, "everything is ready fixed. All my clothes is out of the house. And the cab will be at the corner at two o'clock, after midnight. I thought that was just about the dearest hour of the night."

"Yes, I think so too."

"And now, ma'am, if you will take my advice, you will just go to bed and try to sleep. It is now nine o'clock, and you can get four clear hours of sleep, for I needn't to wake you up before one."

"Sleep! Oh, Ennis, do you think it would be possible for me to sleep on the eve of my escape?" exclaimed Gladdys, excitedly.

"I do suppose not; but then, anyways, you had better undress and go to bed. It will refresh you to lay there at your ease, and it will prevent missus from suspecting anything in case she should take it into her head to make you another visit this evening."

"True," said Gladdys, and she immediately followed this advice.

Of course, sleep was out of the question; but she lay there resting and listening to the household pacing about on their last rounds before retiring to sleep.

Ennis came up from her supper at ten o'clock, lowered the gas, and seated herself beside her mistress, to watch out the long hours before two o'clock.

"Do try to go to sleep, ma'am, and I will keep awake and wake you up at one o'clock," urged Ennis.

"Impossible," replied her mistress. And Gladdys remained lying there wide awake, listening to the last muffled sounds of the retiring household, while her attendant nodded in her chair, and repeated at intervals:

"Do try to go to sleep, ma'am, and I will keep awake and wake you up at two o'clock."

But as hour after hour passed by, Ennis sank into deeper and deeper slumbers; starting at longer and longer intervals with the spasmodic exclamation that became shorter and shorter, until at length it was nothing more than:

"Do try—two o'clock!"

And at last Ennis fell fast asleep, with her head thrown back and her mouth wide open for a fly-trap, had there been flies to catch. Ennis must have dreamed that her advice was taken; for when the clock struck "one," and Gladdys, who had watched out all the hours with unwinking eyes, arose and shook the sleeper, telling her to wake up, for it was time to get ready to go, Ennis yawned, stretched her arms, and exclaimed:

"Well, ma'am, you have had a real good refreshing sleep, and I am glad of it. For my part, I feel rather tired with keeping awake so long, but I dare say the night air will freshen me up!"

"No doubt of it," said Gladdys, laughing, for the prospect of liberty had greatly raised her spirits.

They were soon ready, and at precisely a quarter to two they turned off the gas, stole from the room, locked the door, taking the key with them, and glided, softly down the stairs.

These stairs that never had been heard to creak before, creaked loudly now beneath their stealthy tread. Patient Gladdys was almost ready to call down maledictions upon them, as they went "crack, crack, crack," under her feet.

And, oh, what ill luck! presently a door opened, a dim light gleamed through the opening, and a voice, half in fright and half in defiance, called out:

"Who's that?"

No one replied. Gladdys sank almost fainting into the darkest angle of the stair-case.

"Who's that?" again called out the voice.

Gladdys uttered a half-suppressed cry.

"For goodness' sake, ma'am, be quiet, and leave it all to me," whispered Ennis.

"Who's that, I say? Now if you don't answer, whoever you are, I'll fire right into you!" a third time called the voice.

"Hush, Master James! It's only me," said Ennis, pushing Gladdys deeper into the dark nook, and standing before her.

"Well, what are you doing out of your bed this time of night? I thought to be sure it was burglars!"

"I came down to get a piece of ice to cool a glass of water for Miss Gladdys—that is all," said the ready-witted Ennis.

"Oh, well, another time answer sooner or you may get into danger. Is cousin Gladdys ill?"

"No, she is feverish and thirsty; that is all."

Now another door opened, and another voice spoke:

"What is the matter, James?"

It was Mrs. Llewellyn's voice.

"Nothing, mother, only Ennis coming down to get some ice for cousin Gladdys," said Mr. Stukely.

"Ennis!" called out Mrs. Llewellyn.

"Yes, ma'am," said Ennis.

"What is the matter with Miss Gladdys?"

"If you please, ma'am, she is only a little restless and feverish and thirsty. I have been sitting with her all night, and now I am going down-stairs to get her a piece of ice to cool her glass of water."

"Very well, I will see her myself in the morning. Be careful of your light, Ennis."

"If you please, ma'am, I haven't got any light."

"That is well. That is safest. Go on," said Mrs. Llewellyn, closing her door.

Mr. Stukely followed suit, and closed his.

A few minutes Gladdys remained panting in the dark corner, until she had got over her fright and recovered her breath, and then she glided noiselessly down the stairs, followed as noiselessly by Ennis.

They gained the street door, passed it safely, and locked it after them, taking the key with them, as Ennis said:

"It won't do for us to leave the house open, for if it should be robbed to-night, they would be sure to think it was me as robbed it, seeing I have run away."

Gladdys agreed with her.

They walked briskly on to the corner of the street, where the cab was waiting.

The driver jumped down and opened the door.

Ennis respectfully helped her young mistress to enter, and then followed her in and took the front seat before her.

The driver received his orders, and the cab started at a brisk rate for the railway station.

It was three o'clock when they arrived there. They got out, and Ennis paid and dismissed the cab, and conducted her mistress into the waiting-room.

The ticket office was not open, and they had two good hours to wait in the deserted room before it would be open. These hours were passed by Ennis in nodding over the rusty stove; and by her mistress in watching the sleepy porters, and in waiting for the office to open.

It was open at five o'clock. Ennis at once took tickets, and got the baggage checked.

At six o'clock they were seated in the carriage, flying northward.

(To be continued.)

THE SAXONS.—Mr. John Brent has finished his excavations in the Saxon cemetery, at Sarr, in Thanet for the present year. He laid open nearly 300 graves, some of especial interest. As an example, one contained four fibulae (two circular and two cruciform); five gold pendants, which, with the fibulae, are elaborately ornamented; a very large crystal ball, set in a silver-gilt frame for suspension; a silver-gilt perforated spoon, set with garnets; an elegant footless glass cup, a silver ring, beads, and other objects, such as buckles, shears, and keys. The weapons, implements, and ornaments from Sarr, are deposited in the Charles Museum, at Maidstone. The Kent Archaeological Society provided the funds at Mr. Brent's disposal, in aid of the expenses for labour, &c.

A MAN WITHOUT MONEY.—A man without money is a body without a soul, a wailing death—a spectre that frightens everybody. His countenance is sorrowful, and his conversation is languishing and tedious. If he calls upon an acquaintance he never finds him at home, and if he opens his mouth he is interrupted every moment, so that he may not finish his discourse, which it is fearful will end with asking for money. He is avoided like a person infected with disease, and is regarded as an incubration to the earth. Want wakes him early in the morning, and misery accompanies him to his bed at night. The ladies discover that he is an awkward booby—landlord believes that he lives upon air, and if he wants anything from a tradesman, he is asked for cash before delivery.

CURIOUS CHINESE BIRD.—Among the birds lately received at the Jardin d'Acclimatation, Paris, there are some trapejans, a kind of Chinese pheasant. These birds are called "Too-Chew-Kee" by the Chinese, a name meaning "the bird that vomits flakes of silk." The size of the trapejan does not exceed that of a common hen. Its plumage displays the most varied and brilliant colours. During summer it displays the magnificence of its plumage by puffing itself up and strutting about with the pride of a peacock, every now and then uttering a hoarse caw; then all at once it thrusts out a tongue at least a foot long, of a beautiful blue, speckled with fiery spots along the middle, at the same time two charming little blue horns make their appearance on its head. This delightful spectacle lasts about a quarter of an hour, after which the bird withdraws its tongue, lets down its horns, and subsides again into its sober toilet for

common wear, uttering an odd sound, as if in mockery of the spectators. Its flesh is excellent, and the Chinese say it has the property of making a man intelligent. There is every reason to hope that the trajapan will be acclimatised.

LADY VENETIA.

CHAPTER XL

I know not how to hope
For consolation ever, if the aid
Of heaven relieve me not
In sending death, for which I do implore.

Dante.

On the following morning the marquis furtively regarded Lucia when she appeared before him. He saw that she was much excited, and the feverish light in her eyes gave him a little uneasiness. Years had not deprived him of all feeling, and he was as tenderly attached to her as he was now capable of becoming to any one.

He would gladly have given her happiness if, in so doing, he would not have marred the worldly prosperity of his darling son. To marry Vittorio to the heiress of Amalfi had been the cherished dream of his later years, and he would not give it up, even if two hearts should be broken by his obstinacy.

"You do not seem well, dear child," he kindly said; "Sister Maria must give up her jaunts abroad and take care of you for a few days, or we shall have you getting ill on our hands."

"The worst is over now," she replied, with a painful attempt to smile; "I shall be better now that I know my fate is settled."

Their eyes met, and there was something in the expression of hers which caused the words he would have uttered to die away upon his lips. Lucia calmly, almost coldly, offered him the letters she held in her hand.

"I wish you to read this first; you see it is from Vittorio. Then I will give you my reply to look over and approve. That reached me yesterday afternoon, and as Vittorio requested, I took sufficient time to reflect: on my course, that he might not accuse me of precipitation, nor my own heart be dissatisfied with what I have done."

"Right—you were quite right, Lucia," muttered the old man, equally surprised by her straightforward manner and the confidence she voluntarily reposed in him. "You have a nice sense of honour, my dear, but I scarcely supposed it would lead you to show me my son's letters."

"Under other circumstances perhaps I should not have done so; but as this virtually asks me for a release from the tie that binds him to me, I consider it right to show it to you, my lord. My reply is so brief that it will tax your patience but a few moments to learn its contents."

The marquis saw that she was placing a strong constraint upon her feelings, and he made a pretence of perusing the lines which were already so familiar to him. He then silently held out his hand for her reply. With a strong feeling of exultation, mingled with some self-reproach, he read the few lines Lucia had gained courage to write:

"Castle Colonna, May 30, 1771.

"Your letter is before me, dear Vittorio, and I have read it again and again, till every turn of expression in it is familiar to me.

"I know that your protestations of regard for me are genuine, for my heart confirms and seals their truth. I know full well that in the union you are about to form no mercenary motive moves you. You feel deep compassion for the young girl who has been taught to love you from her infancy, and cannot now unlearn the lesson without losing life itself: this feeling, aided by the strong compulsion brought to bear on you, will make her your wife.

"It must be so; all my convictions centre to that point, and I feel that we are as effectually parted as if eternity rolled between us. Yet I can still bid you make her happy; can pray that you may yourself find peace and contentment in your union with Lady Venetia.

"Our dream of love was brief as bright, but I tell you in all sincerity that I can school my heart to think of you only as a very dearly cherished brother. Reared as we have been, we should never have dreamed of a nearer tie.

"I give you back your troth, Vittorio, and restore you to the high position you have hitherto held in the affections of your father; I shall no longer be a cause of discord between you. Do not defer your marriage longer than is absolutely necessary. Let me know that your fate is definitively settled, and I shall all the sooner recover the tranquillity which has been so cruelly interrupted of late. Your friend and sister,
"LUCIA VANESSA."

The marquis was touched by this noble resignation, and he said:

"You have indeed acted heroically, Lucia. I feel the sacrifice you have made for my son's sake, and I pledge myself anew to be a true and generous friend to you."

"I cannot thank you for that now, my lord," she replied, in a faltering tone. "Money can never repay me for giving up the man I love; who loves me truly and fervently. You could give us happiness, if you so willed it, but your pride recoils from receiving a nameless orphan as your daughter. So let it be; I have no appeal from your decision, and I submit, but not without pangs that would suffice to break many a stouter heart than mine. Let me go now! I must be alone; my letter you will send at once, I know."

The marquis shrank from the pale impress of suffering on that young face; bowing, he briefly said:

"You can retire to your own apartment; I shall not ask for music to-day, Lucia."

The permission to leave him was all she heard, and she flitted from the room to seek that solitude which was the only solace for anguish such as hers. Alone, she could weep till the fountain of her tears was exhausted; could give utterance to the wretchedness that consumed her heart.

Until she had resigned him past recall, Lucia did not know how dear Vittorio was to her, and when the sound of the horse's feet which bore the groom away with the letters penetrated to her room, her fortitude gave way, and she fell insensible upon her bed.

In this condition she was found by Sister Maria on her return to the castle. She knew what had occurred, for Lucia had asked her counsel, and abided by the advice given her to relinquish all hope of a union with Vittorio, and release him at once from the tie that bound him to her.

Sister Maria's practical views of life showed her that the best years of two lives might be wasted in vain expectation, if they persisted in clinging to their troth, for she felt that nothing short of a miracle would induce the marquis to consent to such a *mésalliance* for his son. Vittorio seemed bound in honour and humanity to another, and in her view it appeared the duty of Lucia to give him up.

Her reasonings only confirmed Lucia's intentions; the renunciation was written, not without many tears, and much rebellion of feeling; but pride and principle conquered, though it now seemed as if life would be sacrificed to the terrible struggle she had endured.

The nun did not summon anyone to the assistance of her young friend when she found her lying still and cold upon her couch. She loosened her clothing, applied cold water to her face and hands, and soon succeeded in restoring suspended animation. But she was too familiar with the signs of illness not to see that Lucia was suffering from nervous excitability which must end in complete prostration unless speedily allayed.

She applied herself to the task, but without success; and having exhausted the simple remedies in her pharmacopoeia, she informed the marquis of her condition, and the family physician was summoned to her side.

Dr. Strozzi came immediately; he was a man of observation and intelligence; he had known Lucia from her childhood, and seemed much surprised at the violence of the attack from which she was suffering.

"It is very strange," he said. "She must have had some violent shock to affect her thus. Yet what can have happened to her in this secluded spot—living, too, as retired as she does?"

He looked at the black robed figure beside him, as if he expected some explanation. After a moment's hesitation, Sister Maria said:

"She has received a shock, doctor. You will hear of it from others, and it may be best to tell you now that you may understand the cause of this illness. My poor darling has relinquished her lover at the command of his father, and it has almost broken her heart. I do not believe she will die. With your skill, and my nursing, we shall bring her through yet."

"Ah, that explains all." And his compassionate glance strayed to the colourless face that rested upon the pillow. "I am afraid it will be almost a death-struggle; but while there is life there is hope, and we will do our best."

Days of intense anxiety—nights of vigilant watching followed this colloquy, and many times the hopes of both nurse and physician died out. Less youth, or less vital strength, must have succumbed; but at last their cares were rewarded by symptoms of amendment; the delirium abated, and Lucia looked on those around her with the clear eyes of restored reason; but she was weak as an infant, and almost incapable of thought or memory.

The marquis missed her ministrations daily and hourly, but he felt too much remorse for the share he

had in causing her illness to fret more than he could possibly help. Pepita was summoned to the castle to fill Lucia's post near him; but he pronounced her music execrable, her singing discord, and her reading without soul or expression.

In spite of this, the wily girl had tact enough to make herself useful to him in many ways. She amused him with her prattle; made him laugh at her airs; and, in the absence of Lucia, he found her better than no companion at all; for he had become so much accustomed to the gentle ways of women that he could not bear to pass a day without a young and pretty face hovering near him.

Pepita made every effort to supplant Lucia, and she cherished the hope that if she used her opportunities to the best advantage she might assume the position she so ardently coveted, without the necessity of removing others by the exercise of her nefarious skill.

In this she was signally disappointed. The marquis was too acute not to sound the depths of her shallow nature, and he but endured her presence till his gentle nurse was in a condition to resume her duties near him.

After the lapse of many dreary weeks, Lucia again moved about the castle, the pale shadow of her former self.

Something seemed to have died out of her life, which threatened to leave her a wreck upon its shores; but she bravely resumed her position at the earliest possible moment, with the faint hope that the effort to be useful to another would assuage the dull pain which gnawed unceasingly at her heart.

She sang to the marquis as in other days, but nothing could have been more touching than the sad wail in her sweetest tones.

The marquis felt that unshed tears were in that voice—that it was a fit echo of the sorrowful spirit within; but he did not relent.

In truth, he comforted himself with the thought that it was too late now; the public betrothal of his son with the heiress of Amalfi had taken place during Lucia's illness, and it was more impossible than ever to retract.

That illness had been sedulously concealed from Vittorio, for his father knew that, if once made aware of her condition, he would have broken every bond that withheld him from her side while she lay hovering between life and death.

Should they meet again before the irrevocable vows were taken, the marquis felt assured that Vittorio would never return to his allegiance to Lady Venetia.

The old nobleman, in his shallow judgment of women, thought he could console the suffering girl by magnificent presents, and scarcely a week passed that Lucia did not find some costly offering laid upon her dressing-table.

She had all a young girl's fondness for beautiful things, but the passing glow called to her cheeks faded away as she thought that these were given as the price of the happiness she had surrendered, and she put them from her sight with a shudder of repulsion, and sank again into the apathy which had been momentarily aroused.

One evening the nun returned from her daily pilgrimage, and sought for Lucia. She had held a long conversation with Dr. Strozzi that morning, and the result was that she took upon herself the task of arousing the poor girl from the indulgence of her grief.

She found Lucia in her own apartment, seated beside an open window, with her head supported on her hand, her eyes vacantly fixed on the wide prospect before her.

Sister Maria sat down beside her, and, drawing her other hand in her own, quietly said:

"Lucia, my child, it is time that this should end. You are slowly perishing of disappointment and chagrin. It is a disease unfortunately so well known among our excitable and down-trodden people that we know it by the name of *passione*. You are too young; your life may become too useful to others to permit you to trifle with it thus."

The large eyes of the poor sufferer were turned on her with a pleading expression, and tears fell from them as she faltered:

"What more can I do? I have tried to forget. I have made every effort to be calm and reasonable under the cruel necessity that forced me to resign my all. Oh, yes! my all; for I have nothing now to hope for or expect."

And the sad wail into which her voice broke was even more touching than her words.

The nun gently said:

"My child, have you not learned that our path here below is but a probation to prepare us for the higher life? Scarcely has existence opened when we begin to feel its thorns; many walk with bruised and bleeding feet throughout its whole extent till rest is found in the grave. Your trial is heavy, I admit; but you dare not doubt that it has been sent for your ultimate

good. We are assured that God loves those he chastises; but if you suffer your first sorrow to break your heart, what account will you have to render to Him for the many good gifts He has lavished on you?"

Lucia clasped her hands deprecatingly. "I have struggled—I still do so; but I cannot feign happiness when it has left me for ever."

"Oh, no, not for ever, if you will take the Christian's view of our earthly lot. While resignation to your fate is refused, you have made but half a sacrifice on the altar of duty. I tell you this, Lucia, and I speak from sad experience."

There was a touch of emotion in her usually calm voice, which at once excited the interest of her companion.

Lucia humbly said:

"Teach me the lesson, Sister Maria, and I will do my best to bring its healing home to my own heart. I can promise no more."

After a pause, the nun said:

"Lucia, I will unveil my past to you. That past which I believed for ever buried in the grave I made for it in the deepest recesses of my heart. You see me calm, hopeful, happy in my usefulness to others; but the time has been when I rebelled against the decree of fate as recklessly as you now do."

She arose, and walked to and fro several moments in an excited manner; then, resuming her calmness, she sat down beside Lucia, and resumed:

"I, you already know, was an only child; we had a neighbour whose vineyard joined ours, who also had but one, and he was a son who was near my own age. From childhood Jacopo and myself were thrown daily together, as you and the young count were. Our attachment grew with our growth, and when we were of an age to become betrothed lovers, no opposition was made to our wishes."

"For a few blessed months all was sunshine with us, and we considered our future union as certain as any mortal event could be. But this happiness did not last."

"Jacopo's father inherited a large fortune from a cousin who died suddenly, and he declared the humble peasant girl who claimed the troth of his son to be no longer a fitting choice for him. He took his measures at once to break off the proposed marriage, and commanded my lover to think no more of me."

"Senior Rossi removed to a distant town, where the property he had lately inherited was situated, taking his son with him; but the poor lad found means to communicate with me, and assure me of his undying fidelity."

"I had never for a moment doubted him; but I passionately resented the conduct of his father. I refused to enter a family which looked down on me because a sudden and unexpected accession of fortune had made them more prosperous than the friends they had known and valued throughout all their former life."

"I wrote to Jacopo, and expressed my feelings fully and clearly."

"When he read my letter he evaded his father, and came to answer it in person. He was so full of love and despair that I had no strength to resist his pleadings, and our betrothal was renewed in the most solemn manner."

"This was done with the full approbation of my mother, for she did not share in my scruples of pride. She considered the parents of my lover as bound by their previous consent to our union, and she declared that we should live with her if they refused to receive their only son because he had honourably fulfilled a contract they themselves had sanctioned."

"I did not then attach due importance to the command which says, 'Honour thy father and thy mother, and most fearfully was I punished for it."

"Jacopo returned to his home, where many stormy scenes occurred between himself and his parents. They refused him permission to return to me, and declared that they were already negotiating a more suitable alliance for him."

"That rendered him desperate. The same night he forsook his home without their knowledge, leaving behind him a letter, telling them that he had gone to claim his bride, and would never return unless they consented to receive her with the kindness and affection due to his wife."

Again the speaker made a brief pause, and when she again spoke, her voice was slightly husky, in spite of her efforts to speak calmly.

"Jacopo embarked on a small fishing-vessel for Syracuse. A fearful storm arose, the bark went down, and all on board perished."

The voice sank for an instant, but she recovered, and went on:

"The disobedient son was cast out from God's mercy, and I then thought, as you now do, that in losing him I had lost my all. When the fatal news came to me in the midst of my bridal preparations, I received it as the undisciplined always do—I arraigned the justice of God, and refused to be comforted."

"How long I wandered in that night of sorrow I cannot say, but life and reason almost succumbed beneath the blow. I was heedless of my mother's prayers, was unmindful of her failing health, caused by the burden I selfishly placed upon her, till she was stricken down by illness. Then I suddenly awoke to the consciousness that life has its duties which we cannot with impunity neglect."

"I loved my mother very tenderly, and I at once assumed my proper place as her nurse. She struggled long and fearfully with the grim tyrant, but eventually he was baffled, and she was restored to me. I felt that I had cause to be thankful for this great mercy: my feelings softened, and I became penitent for the hardness of heart, and selfish indulgence of grief which had brought her to this point, for I was sensible that my neglect of the daily business of life had put on her a burden she had not strength to sustain."

"The good padre who lived near us came to visit her during her illness; he talked with me earnestly and sensibly, and I laid bare my heart to him. He fortunately knew how to apply balm even to such wounds as mine, and tranquillity at length returned to my bruised and bleeding heart. He bade me go forth among the suffering and needy, and find how happy my lot was in comparison with theirs."

"With a chastened and humbled spirit, I obeyed him, and the dove of peace, with heaven's sunshine on its wings, gradually settled over my heart. Long years have passed away since then. Jacopo is as dear to me to-day as when we last stood clasped in each other's arms upon the sea-shore; but I have ceased to mourn his fate. God knew what was best for him and for me, and I know that he will stand upon the shining sea shore to welcome me when my pilgrimage on earth has ended. This certainly gives me strength for my daily tasks, and joy in performing them, as you have had ample opportunities of knowing."

"Now I ask of you the effort to throw from you the weight that is crushing you. No one can help you but God; ask Him for strength and He will give it to you; dedicate your life to a noble purpose and He will aid you."

She paused, and Lucia replied, with deep emotion: "I promise to do my best. Your story has interested me deeply, dear sister, and I appreciate the motive which led you to relate it. My trial is far less severe than yours, for I am only called on to resign my beloved one to a life of splendour and enjoyment, while you gave yours to death. If I believed Vittorio happy in the prospects before him, I think I could be more contented with the fate that bids us live asunder; but I know he is not, and the consciousness of this aggravates my own misery."

Sister Maria had now quite recovered her composure. She compassionately regarded her young friend as she said in gentle tones:

"Let me speak the truth to you, Lucia. I think you can bear it, and it will be best for you to have this illusion destroyed. I do not doubt that Count Vittorio loved you with the sincerity of a first passion; that if it had been possible to do so, he would have braved the authority of his father to make you his wife. His dependence forbade that, and he wisely submitted to redeem the plighted word of the marquis, which bestowed his hand on the heiress of Amalfi. My child, Vittorio is a young and impulsive man; Lady Venetia is a charming girl, in spite of the defect in her person. She loves him devotedly, and Vittorio will be very insensible if he does not, in time, return her affection. If the young count possesses half the noble and amiable traits for which you give him credit, such must inevitably be the course of events. Believe me, the worst part of his disappointment is over ere this, though you are pining your life away on his account. Rouse yourself, my child, and let it no longer be so. You have an elastic constitution, and such young blood as yours must again bound with life and joy in spite of your present depression."

Lucia looked despondent.

She faintly asked:

"Do you really believe that Vittorio will ever love her better than he has loved me?"

"No; I believe that the first passion of a man, if worthily bestowed, is never forgotten—never renewed for another with the same vivid intensity; but life teaches us that the happiest marriages are not founded on such. In our country, indeed, the higher classes have little opportunity of forming such attachments. Girls are married as soon as they issue from the convents in which they have been educated, as Lady Venetia will be. She is more fortunate than most women of her degree; for she has known and loved her betrothed from her childhood. If what is told of her is true, she must win a warm place in Vittorio's regard; and when the glamour of his passion for you has had time to subside, she will have power to make him happy."

There was sympathy in her tones, though her words sounded hard to the sensitive listener.

They entered her heart as a probe; and, painful as

the wound was, she must writhen a little. She understood and appreciated the kind motives of her friend, and forgave her the pain she inflicted. With a wan smile, she said:

"You are very good to interest yourself so deeply in me. I will show my gratitude by endeavouring to arouse myself from the terrible apathy that is creeping over me. When the marquis can spare me I will join you in your daily excursions, and from my own sorrow learn to minister to that of others. I will think less of Vittorio, since it is possible for him to find happiness. I will try and be unselfish enough to rejoice that it may be so. You have done me much good, Sister Maria, and you shall see that I am not so weak as I have lately shown myself."

"Then all will be well, my love. Do not suffer yourself to feel alone in the world, for I am your fast friend, and in every emergency you may look to me for aid and advice. Let me once more see you smiling and happy, and I shall go on my way rejoicing."

"I can scarcely promise that yet, but I will do the best I can."

And the expressive eyes of the speaker assured the nun that she was in earnest.

A message from the marquis here summoned Lucia to his presence, and she went to him at once.

He asked for music, and she placed herself before the harp, and played and sang with something of the old spirit.

Her voice seemed suddenly to have regained all its brilliancy, and the old man listened with rapture. He was far from comprehending that in that hour she was singing a requiem over her buried hopes; chanting an epithalamium for the marriage in which she trusted her lover might find happiness.

Since her conversation with the nun, a peace she could not comprehend had sprung into her heart, and, for the first time, she realized that life need not be stripped of all its sweetness, even if the crown of successful love was denied it.

When she ceased the marquis said:

"If the opera manager could have heard you sing this evening, Lucia, he would offer you higher terms than ever to lure you from me. I was fearful that your late illness had affected your voice, but I have never heard you sing so well."

"It is but the glad peep of the caged bird at the recovery of his freedom," she replied.

He regarded her keenly as he slowly said:

"Is it indeed so? And have the rosy shackles which were to last for ever so easily fallen from you both?"

"So easily!" she repeated, with starting tears. "Oh, my lord, remember the last few weeks of my life, and recall your words. I have suffered, and rebelled; but my right reason has returned. A tender and true friend has shown me that contentment with the lot awarded me is at least in my power, and I have resolved to attain it. That is all I can boast."

"And that is much. I owe Sister Maria a debt of gratitude I shall not fail to pay. Be to me the same blithe and gay companion you were before all this annoyance commenced, and your reward may be much more brilliant than you can possibly anticipate."

"I ask but one, and that is to forget the past," she replied, with a half-startled expression; for she was at a loss to understand his last words, or the tone in which they were uttered. "I will endeavour to cast aside my depression, that you may have no cause to complain of me."

"My dear Lucia, if you gave me cause I should never think of complaining. I did not so, even when I was compelled to put up with the intolerable croaking of Pepita during your illness. But she has some wit, and a great deal of impudence. I believe she aspired to fill your place near me, but that, you know, was impossible. No one else can be to me what my little Lucia is."

"I hope not, my lord," she quietly said. "I should have been sorry to find a rival in Pepita."

"A rival! who spoke of such a thing?" he asked, with some irritation. "I am not quite in my dotage yet—I do not compare a pure pearl with a shell filled with something intended to counterfeit it. You are my pearl, Lucia, and it shall be your own fault if you do not have a magnificent setting."

She regarded him with an anxious expression of such perplexity that the marquis burst into a laugh. He presently went on:

"You don't understand me, child. Never mind—perhaps you will before long. I am not in the humour to explain myself just now, nor are you quite yet ready to listen to me. Play to me till I fall asleep, for I am nervous this evening."

In a state of complete bewilderment Lucia resumed her music; and her voice rang out with brilliant power, while the performer was scarcely conscious of what she was singing.

What could the marquis have meant? And then he looked at her significantly—his expression was so

different from any she had hitherto seen on his face—that she could not comprehend it.

The invalid at last slumbered, and with a vague feeling of uneasiness Lucia glided from the room, and sought her own, there to form new resolutions, to abjure deceitful hopes, and school her heart to the new and lonely phase of life that had seemed to open before her.

She prayed earnestly for help and guidance, and that night her slumbers were sweeter and more refreshing than any which had sealed her weary eyelids since her illness.

CHAPTER XII

Indignation, filled with sorrow, wounds me,
Picturing before me every torturing ill
That I must suffer while my life endures;
For Fate hath cruelly contrived to wound
My heart in such a way that it hath died.
Italian Translation.

COUNT AMALFI and his daughter were together in the hall of the Alhambra. Venetia reclined beside the fountain in a large cushioned chair, and the light of perfect happiness which had of late shone in her eyes seemed clouded. Her father regarded her with the observant eyes of vigilant affection, and he bent tenderly over her, and asked:

"Why does a shadow rest on you to-day, my love? Is anything wanting to your happiness? Speak, my darling; and if it is in my power to attain it, you shall have whatever you desire."

She smiled very sweetly upon him, as she replied: "My dear father, you are ever too kind and indulgent to your spoiled daughter. I know that I am very foolish, but this is an annoyance you cannot redress. It is, after all, but a fancy of my own, and I would rather not speak of it."

Amalfi regarded her fixedly a few moments, and then abruptly asked:

"Does your uneasiness concern Vittorio?"

A scarlet flush passed over her clear cheeks, and she averted her head, without replying.

The count drew nearer to her, took her hand in his, and tenderly said:

"I am answered, Venetia, without the necessity of more. I suppose no true marriage can be made without some heart-burnings and jealousies between the parties before it takes place. You and Colonna have had a lovers' quarrel, I suppose; but, you know, the old adage says, 'The quarrels of lovers are the renewal of love.'"

She quickly said:

"Oh, no, you are quite mistaken. We have not quarrelled—I hope we never shall; but—but a feeling of great dissatisfaction has crept into my heart—I hardly know how. Vittorio is punctilious in his attentions to me: he tries too much to show me that his allegiance is due to me; and a cold fear has gradually taken possession of me that, after all, I may not be the first choice of his heart. Oh, my father, the very thought chills me to the soul. His perfect and entire love is all that can satisfy me—without that I shall be the most wretched woman if I become his wife."

A bitter pang convulsed the heart of the listener; but he stifled it so far as to retain perfect command over his features.

"Nonsense, my love. Why should you imagine that your boy-lover has grown indifferent to you? If his old affection did not induce Vittorio to come hither in pursuit of you, why should he have come at all? That he did so should be to you a sufficient proof of the sincerity of his attachment."

"But there was a contract by which he held himself bound. You have always told me so. Besides, the will of his father may have constrained his inclinations. Father, I conjure you, if this is so, tell me the truth. Let me not go blindfold into the most important transaction of my life. Justice to Count Colonna should also induce you to enlighten me."

The sudden ebbing of every shade of colour from cheek and lips, the wild intensity of her pleading eyes, and the unconscious motion that raised her hand to her painfully-throbbing heart, showed her father that further excitement would be dangerous to her—the knowledge of the painful truth, possibly be fatal; and he crushed back his own emotions, and, assuming a calmness he was far from feeling, lightly said:

"Truly, where there is no cause for real sorrow, women are fertile in expedients to raise imaginary phantoms to scare themselves with. Do you suppose that I, an Amalfi, with all the pride of my race strong within me, would permit my only child to bestow her hand on any man who does not value it as the most precious gift fate can give him? Think of the position in which you place Vittorio by the suspicion that he may have sought you from interested motives. He has been publicly betrothed to you, and that leaves him no other ground to stand on if he does not love you."

A faint shade of colour swept up to her white cheeks, as she eagerly said:

"If I could think him capable of such meanness, I should cease to care for him. But the son of the Marquis of Colonna has no need to seek fortune with his bride. Oh, no—I feel assured that I am not sought for my wealth."

"And so do I, *cara mia*," said her father, with assumed cheerfulness. "You—so charming, so adorable—can only be sought for yourself. I am satisfied to give you to Vittorio, my child, and who can have so deep an interest in your happiness as myself? If I thought him unworthy, or cold to you, I would at once cancel my consent to your union. Suppose I should require you to give him up, what would be your feelings?"

A shiver passed through her sensitive frame, and a swift flash of pain passed over her face. She said, in a low voice:

"In that contingency the sun would die out of the heavens for me. Darkness would shroud my soul, and I should die of hopelessness. But even that would be preferable to binding Vittorio to me in loveless bonds. In the grave is rest; in a discordant marriage there must be utterable misery."

The father listened with painful interest, for he was but too well aware that honour and compassion alone bound his promised son-in-law to the fragile being whose hold on life was so feeble that a sudden access of emotion might shatter it for ever.

His love for her was idolatrous, and to guard her from suffering, to save her from disappointment, was the one thought of his life. He tenderly and earnestly said:

"Trust to me, Venetia, and, as far as may be, I will secure your future life from every cloud of unhappiness. I have perfect confidence in Vittorio. I know that he cherishes for you a deep and tender devotion, which will lead him to be as careful of your well-being as your poor old father has hitherto been. No true man could live near so charming a being as yourself and not become tenderly attached to her. Lay aside your fears, darling, that either yourself or Vittorio will find cause for discontent in the union you are about to form."

She sighed heavily, and said:

"I do not know how it is, but something seems always to come between us when I think of our union; a shadow that breathes coldly on me seems to flit around me, and forbid such dreams. Last night I had a strange vision: I saw bending over me a sweet, pale face, and the lips unclosed to ask me, in reproachful tones, 'Why have you taken my Vittorio from me, when he was all I had, and you have so much withheld him?' I awoke in a fright, but soon fell asleep again, and the dream was repeated. It was the recollection of that which clouded my brow this morning."

"My dear, I gave you credit for more strength of mind than to place faith in such gossamer things as dreams. You had surely been conjuring up some jealous fancy before you slept, and it only reproduced itself in the fantasy of dreamland. Put aside such thoughts; your marriage will now take place very soon. The settlements are nearly completed; your bridal trousseau is daily expected from Paris, and, if it suits you, the ceremony could take place two weeks from to-day."

"So soon?" she asked, with a half-startled glance. "Oh, do not hurry on our marriage. Let us enjoy the delicious season of courtship a little longer. We have been intimately associated so short a time that I have not yet quite accustomed myself to the thought of spending my whole future life with Vittorio."

"As you will, my love. Two weeks or two months can make but little difference. Immediately after your marriage, you will set out for Paris, where Vittorio wishes to consult a celebrated physician about your health. He thinks Dr. Dumont's skill can restore you entirely. Under his care, I hope you will soon be well enough to go into general society, and enjoy life as others of your age do."

She smiled brightly, but said:

"I care very little for gaiety, as you know, for I am not fitted to play a part among the more favoured children of fashion. But if Vittorio looks on me with eyes of affection, I shall cease to lament what God has withheld, and have a thankful heart for what he has bestowed. Ah! with him always for my companion, I shall feel that my lot is a blessed one."

Her father tenderly replied:

"It shall be blessed, my darling. Of what value are my high station, my great possessions, if they cannot purchase happiness for the idol of my life? But there comes your betrothed, in time to join you in your evening drive."

As he ceased speaking, the young count entered, with a smile on his lips, and a glance of tender interest towards Lady Venetia, which caused her heart to bound with renewed happiness.

He was much changed, in these few weeks, from the sparkling and gay youth who had been the life of the castle.

He looked older and graver than his years, and there was an expression of reticence in his firmly closed lips, a power of self-control in his whole manner, which showed that within a brief space of time more of the character of the future man had been developed than in all his previous life.

He approached Lady Venetia and addressed her with a tender reverence, which revealed his feelings more eloquently than words.

To him she was sacred, for she loved him blindly, adoringly; and he firmly believed that a suspicion of his preference for another would destroy her.

Since the sacrifice of his own feelings was inevitable, he resolved that it should be made without any apparent shrinking on his part.

When Lucia's letter came, resigning all claims on him, there was a wild storm of emotion, which passed, leaving, as all whirlwinds do, desolation and ruin behind.

Though he had himself asked her for freedom to obey his father's commands, he had hoped against hope that she would bid him brave all for her sake. But it could not be; bound and helpless, he felt that a union with the woman he loved was beyond his reach, and he could not refuse to bestow such happiness as he was capable of giving to the unfortunate girl, who had been taught to centre all her hopes in him.

When Vittorio was calm enough to act, he sought Amalfi, and signified to him that no obstacle now existed to the proposed union with his daughter.

The father did not seek to probe his feelings too deeply; he was satisfied with the assurance that the young count was ready to fulfil the contract, on the completion of which he had set his own heart, and he joyfully ordered preparations for a public betrothal.

To this the numerous friends of the family gathered, and the bride-elect was the object of congratulations on the suitable alliance she was about to make.

Costly gifts were showered upon her, which she valued little in comparison with one love-beaming glance from the eyes of her adored Vittorio. But throughout the ceremony his looks were strange and pre-occupied, and she felt the hand that clasped her own chilling into ice.

In that moment the first fear came to her heart that she was not his choice above all others, and she fancied that a shadow stood between them when he placed the betrothal ring upon her finger, which whispered:

"He is mine—he is mine, in spirit and heart; then why will you tear him from me?"

At that moment Lucia lay as one apparently dead, with the breath of life fluttering almost imperceptibly upon her lips. When she was aroused from this death-like trance, she said in a feeble whisper to Sister Maria:

"I have seen him! he has given himself to another, but he is not happy. His thoughts were with me, even while he clasped the hand of his betrothed, and placed upon it the ring which should have been mine."

A brilliant festival followed the betrothal; and the count aroused himself from painful regrets to play his part successfully in the pageant. Many envied him the brilliant future that lay before him as the husband of the richly-dowered heiress, though they consoled themselves by shrugging their shoulders and saying:

"Poor girl! it was lucky she had wealth, or she would never have found a husband, deformed as she is."

The weeks of daily unrestrained intercourse which followed began to produce the effect the nun had foretold. The sweetness, grace, and tenderness of his bride won its way slowly but surely to Vittorio's heart; and he felt that the sacrifice he had made would not be without its reward to himself. He could never love Venetia with the impulsive outpouring of feeling which had characterised his passion for Lucia; but he could cherish for her a warm and tender regard, which would lead him to consider her happiness before his own—to guard her from sorrow as far as lay in his power. With this faint reflection of the love he was capable of feeling, she must be contented, for he could give her no more.

But no heart that truly loves can be satisfied with such a return as this for the wealth of feeling which is lavished without stint; and a vague fear arose in that of Lady Venetia which led to the conversation with her father just related.

How he allayed her fears we have seen, and to the count's greeting she replied by a glance of confiding affection, which sent a pang to his heart.

He felt that she was wronged, but he was powerless to act otherwise than he had done.

But for the belief that she would be struck lifeless to his feet in the first moment of disclosure, Vittorio would long since have told her all; but, warned as he had been, not only by her father's words, but her own delicacy of appearance, he dared not attempt such a course.

After exchanging a few words with him, she arose, and said:
"It is quite time for the Marina. I will be ready for the drive in a few moments."

Disappearing into her boudoir, she left the two gentlemen together.

Amalfi looked searchingly at Vittorio, as he slowly said:

"My daughter and I have been discussing the time for the marriage. I proposed two weeks from to-day, but she demurred, and I have consented to a delay of two months, that the sweet misery of courtship may be prolonged."

The young count breathed heavily, and an expression of relief came upon his face. He merely bowed, and said:

"I have now no will but Lady Venetia's. If it is her wish that our union shall be so long postponed, I shall not object."

"No; nor, by heaven! would you object if she postponed it indefinitely," said Amalfi, in a tone of repressed rage. "Oh, my God! that I should have to make such an appeal to you, or any man. Colonna, her heart is wounded by your indifference; she suspects the past, and I have had much ado to soothe her into the quietness that is necessary to her life. Do you hear me say to her life?"

The young man replied, with dignity:

"It is that conviction, my lord, which has bent me to your will. By your own act I am the betrothed of your daughter. I have pledged my honour to consider her happiness before my own, but I have been perfectly open with you. You cannot accuse me of practising any deception on you, though unhappily I have been compelled to do so towards Lady Venetia. Knowing how much is at stake, I shall now make every effort to conceal from her that she is not the first choice of my heart."

"You promise me this?" eagerly asked the father. "You will be true to your pledge? Oh, Vittorio—bitter is the wound to my pride to know that I must force my child on your acceptance or see her perish. In the anxiety of your father and myself to accomplish this marriage, we have most cruelly wronged you both. You do not love Venetia—I see that you shrink from the thought of a union with her."

Vittorio compassionately replied:

"Calm, my lord, to torture yourself unnecessarily. I shall love your daughter very dearly. I shall deal kindly and tenderly with one so dependent on me for happiness; and if you just now detected any shrinking in my manner when you spoke of our immediate union, it was not repulsion toward her that moved me. It was but the sudden chill of thinking that an impassable barrier would so soon arise between myself and one to whom my vows were pledged before I knew that I was not free to give them. I have concealed nothing from you. I am but a man, and yet a very young one. Therefore, you cannot expect from me the self-control of a greybeard; but you may, with justice, expect the honourable fulfilment of every pledge I have made to your daughter."

The count was struck by the noble air of the speaker and the dignified manner of his avowal.

He kindly said:

"Forgive my hasty words, Vittorio: you are worthy of Venetia; and, in time, she must supplant her rival. In this affair I have acted for the best, and I believe I have acted right. But here comes my daughter."

Lady Venetia glanced from one to the other; but on neither face could she detect the emotion which had swayed them during her absence.

She took her lover's arm in silence, and descended to the elegant carriage which awaited her, its firm mettled steeds held under control by the strong, firm hand of a practised driver.

Vittorio almost lifted her in; and her father placed himself beside her, while her lover mounted a splendid Arabian, brilliantly caparisoned, and rode beside the carriage, with his hand upon the window, making passing comments on the scene on which they immediately entered.

At that hour of the evening, the Marina was crowded with vehicles and pedestrians; for it is the fashionable drive and promenade of Palermo.

Our party encountered acquaintances and friends at every step of their progress; and gay greetings were given and returned as the carriage rolled through the brilliant throng to the garden of Flore.

This is situated toward the western limit of the Marina; and they drove beneath the triumphal arch which forms the grand entrance.

It is surmounted by an eagle with outspread wings, with a shield and crown upon its breast, and on each side lions couchant guard the entrance to the beautiful Eden within.

As the vehicle proceeded, an exquisite panorama unrolled itself before them.

The wide intersecting avenues, lined with orange, lemon, willow, plantain, and aloe trees, clothed in their various shades of verdure, mingled in one har-

monious whole, brightened by the gay profusion of flowers that bloomed on every side, while the murmur of innumerable waterfalls filled the air with their melody.

The highest art of the landscape gardener had been brought in play to render available the natural beauty of the scenery; and the inhabitants of Palermo can boast that in the world there is no rival to their Marina and floral garden.

Nor have they forgotten even in this scene devoted to enjoyment, to pay due honour to the mighty dead who claimed their nativity in the island.

In the centre of a beautifully decorated square is placed the bust of Bellini, and in another that of Pacini, the eminent musical composers whose works have given so much pleasure to the world.

The carriage was slowly driven through the garden till it gained the side of a deep basin, from which arises a pile of rocks which form a seat for the genius of Palermo: a knight with royal emblems around him, and gushing waters pouring their tribute at his feet.

Toward this point all the avenues converged, each one ornamented by a statue personifying one of the passions. From this point small columns, crowned with vases filled with rare flowers, aviaries for singing birds, arched trellises garlanded with roses, mingled with majestic forest trees, formed a scene of unsurpassable sylvan beauty.

Marble seats were placed in convenient spots, on which many were resting, while a gaily dressed crowd of pedestrians thronged the walks, enjoying themselves with the *abandon* peculiar to the people of Southern Europe.

From this spot the lovely valley is visible, bounded by the blue waters of the Mediterranean, glistening in the evening sunshine. A fine band played the most popular music, and the chatter of lively voices made the air vocal with human mirthfulness.

Our party alighted, and took possession of a seat beneath a colonnade covered with flowering vines. Friends soon joined them, and an hour was spent in that *à fresco* enjoyment which is so dear to the Italian of every grade.

To Lady Venetia this moving panorama of life was deeply interesting from its novelty, for only within the few past weeks had she been permitted to leave the seclusion of the convent to mingle with the outside world. She loved to see people happy, and her fair face became almost radiant as she watched the lovely children that frolicked before her with the keen enjoyment of their years.

One little girl, attracted by her sweet and genial expression, ventured to approach her and offer a few flowers she held in her hand.

"They tell me you are a bride, signorina, and I give you the fitting emblem of your state. My mother has taught me the language of flowers, and I know that the orange blossoms should decorate your brow."

She blushed and smiled as she took them.

"I am but the betrothed, not yet a bride; but I accept your offering as an expression of kindly feeling, and thank you for it."

She took the spray of orange blossoms, and looked up to Vittorio with a confiding smile; but at that moment his thoughts were far away from her. A face, casually seen in the crowd, had recalled that of Lucia, and he was wistfully straining his eyes after its owner, hoping to catch another glimpse even of one who reminded him of her.

His betrothed softly said:

"What is it, *cara mio*? What interests you so deeply?"

A red flush passed over his brow, and he hurriedly said:

"Pardon me, Venetia; but—but I did not hear you. I saw a face which reminded me of one I once knew, and—"

He paused abruptly, but hastened to atone for his momentary neglect by admiring the flowers, and inhaling their perfume. But there was something in his manner that struck coldly to her heart, and she eagerly scanned the crowd in the hope that she could discover the object of his interest. She would have repudiated the idea of jealousy, yet she would have given much to know what sex was the person after whom her betrothed had so eagerly gazed.

Amalfi stood near his daughter, apparently absorbed in unpleasant thought; his eyes fixed searchingly upon the slouching figure of a man with a large sombrero drawn over his face, as if to conceal it as much as possible from observation. He stood near the entrance of one of the avenues, and his plain, almost shabby dress was conspicuously contrasted with the festive garbs around him.

A vague and unpleasant memory thrust itself before the count, and he furtively watched the stranger in the hope that he could satisfy himself that he was mistaken in his identity. This hope was presently ended by a slight and peculiar sign made by the object of his

scrutiny, by crossing his fingers upon his breast. He then slowly inclined his head toward a grove of cypress trees that loomed in the distance.

For an instant Amalfi stood as one paralyzed; but perceiving that the man stood awaiting a reply, he rapidly made a countersign, which seemed to be understood, for the stranger moved at once in the direction of the grove, which has been dedicated to the memory of the great men whose genius have reflected splendour on the annals of Sicily. In the floral garden a species of pantheon has been dedicated to their ashes, and beneath the funeral shadows of the cypress grove the tombs of Diodorus, Archimedes, Theocritus, and others less known to fame, arise in solemn stillness.

Making an excuse to his daughter and her companion, for leaving them a few moments, Amalfi quickly followed the stranger, and his figure was soon lost in the crowd.

(To be continued.)

WOMAN AND HER MASTER.

By J. F. SMITH, Esq.

Author of "The Jewit," "The Pretate," "Minnigrey," &c.

CHAPTER CXXII.

It is a tale old as man's perfidy
And woman's sufferings.

Their of the Sept.

THE presence of Ned Cantor was almost as great a cause of uneasiness as that of Bell Hazleton to the mistress of Don Mitiltitz; the cynical glances with which he regarded her—his nods and whispers in the ear of her destroyer—alarmed her; and she resolved to listen to their conversation, and learn her destiny—for suspense was worse than even the confirmation of her fears.

"Where is your mistress?" demanded the master of the proclida, of the domestic who announced that the repast was ready.

"With the English ladies," replied the man.

"And Ferdinand?"

"With them, too: the children are at play together."

The vice-consul looked at his companion, and smiled.

In a room richly but ostentatiously furnished, in the proclida, Ned Cantor and his host were seated at table. The covers had been removed, and the two worthies were discussing the their wine and the project against the happiness of poor Bell Hazleton in the most perfect harmony together.

"Well!" said the former, as he raised his glass to the light, and eyed with the air of a connoisseur the beads which sparkled like globules of light on the ruby liquid, "have you made up your mind touching that gal of yours?"

"You mean Alma?" replied the half-caste, thoughtfully.

"Who the deuce else should I mean?" observed his friend; "two in the house will never do."

"I have thought of it!" answered the heartless ruffian, in a tone of cold deliberation; "she ships to New Orleans with the rest of the gang."

A sigh of suppressed agony—such as escapes from woman's outraged, breaking heart—might have been heard from behind the portiere, or curtain of crimson cloth which served the purpose of a door; but the speakers were too much interested in the details of their infamous project to notice it.

"And the boy?" added Ned.

"Hang it!" exclaimed Senator Mitiltitz, "I can't part with the child! The place would be so infernally dull without him! He is my own boy—little doubt of that—and has a thousand little engaging ways; and— No, no!" he added; "the mother, if you like—but not the son."

"You know best," observed his Britannic Majesty's representative, coolly, at the same time filling himself another glass; "but your resolution is not philosophical—I think that's the word. Where's the use of keeping the brat without its mother?—to say nothing of the price he'd fetch! I dare say, now," he continued, in a tone which implied that he had duly estimated the value of the article to be disposed of, "he would bring a good three hundred dollars."

"More likely five."

"Five hundred dollars?" repeated his guest; "a good round sum to pay for the gratification of such a whim!"

"I am rich enough to indulge it!" was the observation of Senator Mitiltitz. "When do you return?"

"To-morrow," replied his guest. "I dare not be absent too long from Belize—it might excite suspicion; but I shall leave the women with you. I need not tell you what slippery cattle they are. So keep a sharp look out. I suppose by the time I return," he added, with a leer, "Bell and you will understand each other."

"It shall not be my fault if we do not," exclaimed

the half-caste, his eyes flashing in anticipation of an unmanly triumph over a poor, defenceless girl, whom the vilest treachery had betrayed into his hands; "my means of persuasion are pretty certain! I love her," he continued, "with all the ardour of my southern blood—love her as I never yet loved woman! Her very coldness and repugnance to my suit increase my passion."

"Generally the case!" answered Ned, in a philosophical tone; "women are cunning critters. But with all their cunning, they don't know how to keep a man. As soon as they let us perceive how deeply they love us, they become insipid."

"Right!" said the senator; "it was the case with Alma."

"No fear of Bell falling into the same mistake!" observed the convict, with a grin. "She hates you!"

"The greater the pleasure in teaching her to love me!" hastily interrupted his friend. "In love, as in everything else, the prize that is easily won is but lightly valued! But enough of this. Leave me to carry on my courtship in my own fashion."

"Of course, you'll marry her?"

"If she wishes it—and she will wish it," added the ruffian, with fearful emphasis; "nay, weep and pray for the hand she now despises. I am no novice, and have broken a spirit as proud as your ward's."

He might have said "as proud a heart"—for behind the portière stood—or rather tottered—the poor quadroon girl Alma—the mother of his child—who had overheard every word of their conversation—his resolution to sell her, to separate her from her boy—the idol of her young heart—the tie which made her feel it still was human.

Alma had loved her destroyer with all the passionate devotion of her race. Unhappily, her mind had been cultivated—the keen susceptibilities of her nature increased by an education which rendered suffering more exquisite—happiness more intense.

The wretched girl retreated from the place of her concealment with heart and brain alike on fire. Her first feelings were of hate—intense hate—towards her innocent rival.

"I have foreseen this!" she murmured; something whispered her that it would arrive at last! Ferdinand no longer loves me! A fairer form has caught his eye—one of the cold, passionless daughters of Europe has won his fickle heart—and Alma is discarded—cast like a withered flower away—separated from her child—sold to another master—another spoiler—to become again the toy—the victim."

The shudder which shook the frame of the speaker showed how deeply she felt the horror and degradation of the fate which threatened her.

To this storm of despair and grief gradually succeeded one of those fearful calms which in the war of human passions are more terrible than the wildest rage—because less natural. The full, ripe lips of the quadroon became compressed, and the flashing fire of her dark, lustrous eyes subsided to an expression of sullen determination.

"I must be brief!" she said, "brief as the pause allowed me to reflect and to decide! I am both warned and armed."

Striking a small gong which hung suspended in the room, she directed the Mexican boy who answered the summons to send an aged negress, named Marilla, to her presence.

"Marilla!" repeated the lad.

"Have I not spoken?" demanded Alma laughingly.

The youth withdrew, fearful that he had offended—not that his hesitation had proceeded from disrespect—but surprise. He could not imagine what his mistress could possibly require of the old negress, who, being past labour of any kind, was permitted to linger out the remnant of her days about the place—sleeping in the log houses amongst the slaves—upon whose conversation she acted as a spy—and picking up such food as chance or the caprice of those about the proclida cast in her way.

The probability is, that she would long since have been permitted to starve, had it not been for her knowledge in medicine, and the protection of the quadroon girl—who, in the absence of the half-caste, would frequently listen to the tale of her sufferings and adventures. During her long existence the aged creature had passed through every phase in the life of a slave. She had been the mistress of her taskmaster—like Alma, the mother of her children—sold—worked in the diamond mines of Brazil, and the cotton fields of the New World—and, when past labour, sank into the drudge and spy of the proclida of Senhor Mitilizy.

The appearance of the old negress was singular. Her woolly hair was perfectly white, rendering her dark features—which were pursed and drawn into a thousand wrinkles—more hideous by the contrast. Her lean, gaunt figure, bent with toil no less than the weight of years, was scantily clothed in a gown of red cotton, bound round her waist with a faded shawl; her long, bony arms and feet were naked.

The wretched creature was evidently surprised and flurried by the unusual summons. She entered the room leaning upon her stick, stopping at every step to curtsy and propitiate her mistress.

"Lady not angry wid poor old Marilla!" she said; "me no do wicked ting! How young massa do? Um sweet little angel dat."

"Close the door!" exclaimed Alma, in a deep determined tone; "cease your prating, and come near to me."

"Yes, missee, me do all that—anything you say." The speaker returned to the door, which she carefully closed, and then tottered rather than walked towards the pile of cushions upon which the quadroon girl was seated.

"Dere—um shut the door. No hear talkee now. But you no angry wid poor old negress, lady?"

"No!"

"Her glad ob dat—bery glad."

The decrepit being gazed upon the countenance of the beautiful slave for some moments in silence—then shook her white head with an expression of pity and concern.

"You ill, missee—Marilla see dat you bery ill! Um see it all—ill dere—dere, in your heart. What happen you? You too young—too beautiful! Massa no sell you yet."

How fearfully did those few words grate on the ear of the jealous, despairing girl. "Not sell her yet." Implying that there was not the least doubt that such would be her ultimate fate—it had been the speaker's own.

"No!" she answered, hoarsely; "but I am ill—very ill—and feel tempted to try your skill—for I have heard of your knowledge of plants and herbs."

"Um know ebery flower dat grow!" exclaimed the negress, with a low, scarcely articulate chuckle. "Um make little drink dat send missee sleep—when um wake, pain all gone."

"I would have something to prevent my waking—to make my sleep eternal!" whispered Alma, at the same time seizing the crone by the wrist, and drawing her towards her. "Do you understand me? A poison—sudden, deadly, and certain."

"Ye—ye—yes, missee!" faltered the negress.

"You know of such?"

"Yes."

"And will supply me?"

"Missee—missee!" exclaimed the old woman, sinking on her knees, "um dare not—massa too terrible: he burn old Marilla, or give her to de bloodhounds. He lub you—Marilla sure him lub you bery dearly."

A bitter laugh was the only reply of the quadroon.

"Tink ob little massa!" continued the poor creature; "little angel, him die widout his modder."

"True!" said her mistress; "and his father would separate me from my child—sell me for a slave, to make room for a new mistress. It is not for myself I ask it," she added, "but for my rival."

"Dat odder ting!" observed the negress, in a tone of indifference. "But how you gib it her?"

"She is here, beneath my roof."

"One ob de white ladies that come wid Englishman? Him bad man," she added; "him sell him servants—free niggers—to massa for slaves."

Alma again assured her that it was not for herself, but for Bell, that she intended the poison.

"Dem um gib it you!" exclaimed the negress, in a decided tone. "When um young—so many years ago um cannot count—Marilla taken from her children sold in de mines—all cause ob white girl! Massa send me 'way to please her! White girl um wife! Hate white gals!" she added, stamping her foot and grinning with impotent fury; "um hate dem all."

With her long, bony fingers the speaker hastily untied the faded shawl around her waist, and drew from its folds several packages, wrapped in rags and morsels of paper: selecting one which contained a small quantity of greyish powder—probably the ash of some wood—she placed it in the hands of her mistress.

"A little in coffee or wine," she said, "and buccara gal neber drink again."

"Thanks!" whispered Alma, offering several pieces of gold. Strange to say, the negress rejected them.

"No, no—me no want gold! Massa find Marilla hab gold, him tink her steal it! You gib poor old negress rum—dat pay her better dan gold—rum, which make forget—no feel den."

The quadroon girl, as may be supposed, readily promised, and her visitor was dismissed; but not before she had extorted a pledge from her mistress that, happen what might, her agency in the affair of the white girl's death should never be revealed. The precaution was not an unwise one—for the half-caste, on the suspicion merely of such an act, would have sentenced her to a death more fearful than even her long life of suffering and sorrow.

For some moments after she was alone, Alma sat buried in deep reflection: perhaps she sought in her

woman's nature some means to avoid, if possible, the dreadful necessity against which she was armed—for her heart was not quite pitiless and corrupted.

"It is not a crime," she said, "that I commit—but a sacrifice I am about to offer! Better she should die, pure and undefiled, than live to be a despised, broken-hearted wretch like me! Could she foresee the future—the misery and shame from which I save her—she would bless, and not accuse her murderers! Murderers!" she repeated with a shudder; "that is the word—the name which suits me now."

So saying, she staggered rather than walked from the apartment.

CHAPTER CXXIII.

When heaven and angels, earth and earthly things
Do leave the guilty in their guiltiness,
A cherub's voice doth whisper in a child's—
There is a shrine within thy little heart
Where I will hide, nor hear the tramp of doom.

Maria.

THE anxiety and misgiving which Lady Sinclair and her companion experienced at finding themselves under the roof of Senhor Mitilizy gradually subsided when they found that the owner of the house made no attempt to intrude himself upon their presence. The appearance of Alma and her child—the extreme youthfulness and beauty of the former—the evident position which she held in the proclida—calmed the more violent terrors of Bell. In the purity and simplicity of her mind, she could not comprehend how the father of a lovely boy like Ferdinand—the husband or lover of a woman like his mother—could, under the roof which sheltered them, think of offering his vows to another.

"It must have been in a moment of caprice, or under the influence of wine," she observed to her friend, "that he proposed for me at Belize, a madness which he has either forgotten or is ashamed of. Besides," she added, "his—the mother of Ferdinand is so very beautiful!"

Margaret knew by bitter experience that such reasoning is not always to be relied on—that the most variable feelings of mankind are their affections. As a general rule, they are constant only to the worst passions of their nature.

"Pray heaven it prove so!" she replied; "at least there can be no apprehension of violence! My father—bad as he is—for shame, for manhood's sake—would protect you against that. Whatever his feelings towards his child may be, he can have no cause of hatred against you!"

Little did the speaker dream how frail was the reel on which she relied for the protection of the kind, affectionate being whose sympathy had cheered and alleviated the long, dreary years of her captivity and suffering.

Shortly after their arrival, a repast, consisting of game, fruits, and wine, was served to the prisoners in their chamber. It was sent away almost unaltered, even by Cuthbert and his new playmate, Ferdinand—who preferred their gambols with each other to the temptations of the table.

Tired with their sports, the children reposed where nature told them it was sweetest and most secure: Cuthbert in the arms of his mother—and the son of the quadroon in those of Bell: the little archer nestled to her bosom with all the innocent confidence of his years and helplessness. The door opened, and one of the Mexican servants entered with a salver, upon which were two cups of coffee. He handed them first to Bell, who naturally took the one next to her.

At this instant the child woke up.

"Ferdinand is very thirsty," he said, eyeing the coffee wistfully.

"Are you, my love?" replied the kind-hearted girl: "then you shall have this! Bring me another," she added, turning to the domestic.

The boy sat upon her knee. Bell Hazleton held the cup to his lips. Another instant, and he would have drunk the contents, when a shriek, so wild and piercing that it echoed to the remotest parts of the house, arrested her hand, and Alma rushed into the room, and dashed the poisoned beverage to the ground.

"Slavery—madness—death!" she exclaimed; "but I cannot see my boy—my broken heart's first tie—murdered before my face!"

Snatching the child from the arms of the astonished Bell, the quadroon pressed him to her breast—then covered him with frantic kisses, and, with broken sobs and tears, addressing him by those fond, endearing epithets which spring warm and fresh from the heart to the lips of a mother.

"In heaven's name," demanded Lady Sinclair, seeing that her companion in misfortune was too much agitated to speak, "what means this violence—this outrage?"

The unhappy woman eyed her scornfully. "Outrage!" she exclaimed; "ay, those who judge between us will call it such! Your skins are fair—you are of the blood of the oppressors—the stream

which runs in my veins is mingled with that of the oppressed! Outrage!" she repeated; "God, am I not outraged—driven from my home, to make room for another—separated from my child—sold—sold like the beasts of the field, now that the master has tired of his slave, and a new face has caught his fickle heart?"

"I see—I see!" said Bell, advancing towards her; "you deem me your rival—you hate me!" "As the tigress hates the spoiler of her young!" replied Alma, fiercely; "you won from me the only heart I prized—divorced me from the father of my boy! Don't approach me!" she added, with a shudder; "death—death were preferable to the horror of your touch!"

"Alas!" observed the unhappy girl, "I am even still more wretched than yourself! I have been torn from my home and friends—brought here by violence and treachery! Senor Mitilitzky is my aversion—my disgust! I cannot paint to you," she added, "how much, since I have heard your tale, my heart loathes and scorns him!"

"You do not love him!" exclaimed the quadroon, sagaciously, as if she doubted the possibility of any woman resisting the artful wiles and specious promises which had rendered the half-caste master of her heart.

"Love him!" repeated Bell; "I fear him to much for that!"

"Alma fears him, too," continued the quadroon; "but still she loves him—as you will learn to do!" she added mournfully. "You will wed him; he cannot sell you, or separate you from your child—for you are of the race of the free! Alma is a slave!"

The tone of deep despair in which the last words were uttered showed how deeply the wretched girl felt her misery and degradation. The really good and virtuous would pity her—as Bell and Lady Sinclair did—rather than blame her, for having fallen beneath the arts of her betrayer. He was her master—kind bought her when a mere child—treated her with kindness—educated her—made a temple of her young heart, and enshrined his worthless image in its very shrine.

No wonder that the idol polluted the sanctuary, and then deserted it.

"Woman," said Margaret, at last comprehending the danger from which her companion had so providentially been saved, "you would have stained your soul with murder—taken the life of a young creature, if possible more wretched than yourself—to gratify a senseless vengeance—an unfounded jealousy! Would it not be far nobler," she added, "to rescue her from the danger which threatens her?"

"Rescue her!" repeated the quadroon, pressing her hand upon her brow as if to collect her reason. "I do not comprehend your meaning!"

"Did her escape," continued the speaker, lowering her voice, "from this den of cruelty and shame! Enable her to reach Belize: there is a ship of war, commanded by those of our own country, in the bay. Once on board, she will be safe from the pursuit of him you love—separated from him for ever!"

"I see—I see!" exclaimed Alma; "as seas will then divide and mountains roll between them, and the fair daughter of Europe will cease to fill his heart! The risk is fearful—but I can do it! I will do it!" she added, firmly. "I can but risk my life—and that without him were worthless!"

Warmly and earnestly did Bell express her thanks; but her words were unheeded by the unhappy, jealous woman, whose busy brain was searching out the means to secure her flight.

"Can you ride?" she said. "From childhood," replied the poor girl, eagerly, "I have been accustomed to it."

"Enough!" interrupted the quadroon. "You must leave this very night! Your path lies through the forest! I can provide you with a horse, but neither guide nor clue! I will not conceal from you your danger!" she added. "You may meet the savage puma in your path—hear the venomous serpent hissing in the long, damp grass! Trust to your steed for safety: if your nerves fail you, and you check his rein, you are lost!"

Lady Sinclair threw her arms around the companion of her sorrows, as if to shield her from the danger the description of which appalled her.

"I cannot expose you to such terrors!" she said. "Are there no other means of safety?"

"None," replied Alma, sullenly; "at least, none that I can point out or aid her in."

"God will protect me," observed Bell, with resignation and firmness. "The beast of the forest is less terrible in its hunger than man in the whirlwind of his passions!"

"You are resolved, then?" said the quadroon, fixing her eyes upon her as if she would read her soul.

"And ready!" added the spirited girl. "My trust is in Him who has promised to be a father to the fatherless!"

The voice of the half-caste was heard in the hall below, calling in loud and angry tones for Alma, whose cheek turned pale and lips quivered through fear.

"I am lost!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands despairingly. "He will separate me from my boy? I shall see him no more!"

"None are lost," replied Bell Hazleton, "who are faithful to themselves. We shall not betray you!"

When Don Mitilitzky and Ned Cantor entered the room, they found the three females seated, and, to all appearance, conversing in the most friendly manner together. Mitilitzky was completely taken by surprise: his suspicions, if not disarmed, were at least allayed.

"What has occurred?" he demanded. "Occurred!" repeated Lady Sinclair, with well-acted surprise.

"The servants informed me that they heard an outcry!"

"And loud, passionate words!" added Ned Cantor. His daughter smiled, pointed to the broken tea-cup upon the carpet, and said something about an accident with the child.

"Like you women!" exclaimed the ex-convict, with a grin; "always making a fuss about some trifle or other! I have known them," he added, turning to his companion, "scream if a harmless lizard crept in the room, or a night-bird, attracted by the light, dashed its wings against the window!"

"You were not wont to be so nervous!" said his host, fixing his searching glance upon the quadroon girl—who hesitated, stammered, and knew not what to reply.

"You forget, senor," observed Lady Sinclair, answering for her, "that she is a mother, and, hearing the screams of her child, naturally became alarmed! See," she added, "how pale her cheek is! Instead of speaking angrily, you should soothe her with kind words and yet kinder looks: she has not recovered from her emotion yet!"

The passionate tenderness with which his victim loved her boy rendered this explanation so plausible that the half-caste either felt satisfied, or, with the cunning of his race, pretended to be so. He had determined the very next day to remove his slaves to a still more secluded proclivity, concealed in the depths of the swamp, till the British man-of-war should have quitted the coast—and that Alma should be included in the number.

"Good-night," he said, bowing to the ladies with his usual courtesy. "I will intrude no longer. You are doubtless fatigued with your journey! Do not be alarmed," he added, "if you hear my people stirring early in the morning: I am about to remove some of them to the interior."

At these words the quadroon trembled violently, and involuntarily pressed her now slumbering boy closer to her breast.

"Come, Alma," he continued, in the same careless tone—"it is time to leave my guests to repose."

The unhappy girl rose to follow him. There was a species of fascination in his glance which, like that of the rattlesnake, his victim could not resist.

Under pretence of kissing the slumbering child, Bell advanced to his mother. As she stooped over the infant, she whispered in her ear:

"Remember your promise! Save me—save yourself!"

A glance of intelligence was the only reply.

As they were about to quit the room, loud, angry voices and fierce oaths, mingled with the hoarse baying of the bloodhounds, were heard in the court-yard directly beneath the windows.

"Tracked, by all the fiends!" exclaimed Ned Cantor—who felt how completely he would be compromised if, as he suspected, a party from the Revenge were after him. "Look out, Mit!"

His host threw open the sash, and demanded the cause of the disturbance. At the sound of his voice, the loud barking of the dogs subsided to low whinnings and occasional angry growls, above which the cries of the negroes confined in the log-houses rose with painful stillness on the air.

"Are we attacked?" inquired the half-caste.

Half a dozen voices replied in the negative. The next instant a shot was fired: it was followed by a struggle, cries, and a groan.

"We have taken a prisoner, senor!" exclaimed one of Mitilitzky's overseers; "a fellow who has been seen for the last hour skulking around the place!"

"A prisoner!" repeated the don, with a smile which boded little good to the unfortunate wretch who had fallen into his hands; "bring him into the hall—I will talk to him myself!"

As he left the room, he drew a pistol from his belt, and carefully examined the priming and charge before he replaced it.

"God!" exclaimed Lady Sinclair, "for what scenes of blood and violence are we not reserved!"

"Hope better," replied Bell: "something whispers me that the hour of our deliverance is at hand."

Loud, angry voices were heard in the hall below, and the courageous girl crept to the head of the stairs to listen.

When Ned Cantor and his host descended to the hall of the mansion to examine the prisoner, they saw a young man dressed in the holiday attire of a Mexican peasant.

"Now," said the half-caste, addressing him in Spanish, "as you hope to escape death, answer me truly the motive which brought you prowling like a spy around my mansion! Who are you?"

"I am an Englishman!" answered the young man, proudly; "and have lost my way in this infernal forest! The ship to which I belong rides at anchor in the Bay of Belize—so you had better think twice before you offer me violence!"

The hall was so dimly lighted that the convict had not recognized the features of the speaker, but he knew the sound of his voice—it was Frank Hazleton, the man whom he had once intended as a husband for his daughter; but now he only saw in him a being whom he had wronged too deeply to hope for forgiveness—an enemy and avenger.

The wretched man felt not only that his long-cherished scheme of vengeance against his daughter would be defeated, if Frank was permitted to escape, but his grandson would be taken from him, and himself made to answer to the laws he had outraged by the forcible abduction of Margaret and Bell Hazleton.

If over a human being was troubled with few scruples, his Britannic Majesty's consul at Belize was assuredly that happy individual; yet even he felt a slight qualm of conscience when he remembered the many happy hours he had passed in the society of the prisoner, and the views he once entertained about him.

His usual selfishness prevailed, however, over every other consideration; and, drawing Senior Mitilitzky aside, he asked him what he intended to do with the intruder.

His host glanced significantly at the pistol which he held in his hand.

"Well," observed Ned, deliberately, "I suppose it is the best way, since he has discovered the gal! No hoodwinking him: lovers are so deuced cunning!"

"Lovers!" repeated the half-caste, with a ferocious expression—for the worst passions of his nature were excited by the equivocal speech of the consul. "That has settled it! Take him into the yard!" he added, turning to the domestics, for he did not wish to disgust and alarm Bell unnecessarily by his cruelty; "we can settle our dispute there!"

It was impossible to mistake the nature of these orders, but Frank was not a fellow to be led to the slaughter tamely: although bound, he stoutly resisted the attempt to remove him—calling upon Cantor, whom he had at last recognized, to assist him—reminding him that he was bound, not only as his countryman, but by his office to protect him.

"Cowardly villain!" he exclaimed, as the ruffian succeeded at last in dragging him to the door, "my blood be upon your head! The Revenge is in the harbour; its commander knows—"

A piercing shriek cut short all further explanation. Bell had recognized the voice of her brother, and was by his side in an instant, her arms thrown around his neck, her fragile form interposed as a shield between him and his assassin.

"Frank, dear Frank!" she exclaimed, "they will not dare to harm you—heaven will not permit so foul a crime! Monster!" she added, as the half-caste, inflamed with jealousy and rage, brought the barrel of his pistol close to the temples of the young farmer, "would you murder a brother in the presence of his sister?"

At the word "sister," the don dropped the weapon—another instant, and it would have been too late.

"Sister!" he repeated, doubtfully. "You would deceive me. He is your lover!"

"He is my brother!" replied the distracted girl; "my dear, kind, good, affectionate, gallant brother! Ask him!" she continued, turning suddenly round, and pointing with a rapid gesture to Ned Cantor; "that thing of cruelty and falsehood! He knows my lips have uttered nothing but the truth!"

"I know nothing about the matter!" said the convict, in a surly tone; "if Mit is fool enough to believe—"

"He does believe it!" interrupted Bell, seizing the speaker by the arm, and drawing him, before he was aware of her intentions, or could resist it, directly under the light of the lamp which hung suspended by an iron chain from the centre of the ceiling; "look on him—can you not see the lie—the dastardly lie—upon his quivering lips? He fears the brother of the girl he has so infamously outraged—whom he has dragged from her country, home, and friends—fears to meet him face to face, to answer for his misdeeds; and, with the cunning of his nature, would make you the instrument of his vile safety—purchase it by your crime!"

(To be continued.)



KRISSKINGLE'S VISITS. A CHRISTMAS APOLOGUE.

"This package goes up to the Manor House, this to the white house on the hill; this packet over to Squire Raymer's; and these other parcels you will leave as directed."

These were the orders issued by Joseph Norton to his servant, one Christmas-eve, not many years ago; and then he drew his arm-chair nearer to the fire and settled down in a pleasant reverie, calculating the amount of the golden harvest which he expected to reap during the coming year. But he was aroused from his meditations by a rustling noise; and, looking up, he saw a little old man, of grotesque appearance and poorly clad, standing beside him.

"Who are you?" said Joseph, "and what do you want?"

"I want to remind you of something which seems to have slipped your memory. While bestowing your Christmas gifts on your rich neighbours, you have neglected sending anything to the Widow Graham, who lives over the way. She is very worthy, but extremely poor, and unless supplied from your abundance, she is likely to pass a cheerless Christmas."

"Old man," said Joseph, "why do you trouble me about things which concern me not? What have I to do with the Widow Graham's necessities? Poor people must expect to pass cheerless holidays. What right have they to annoy me about it? I didn't gain my wealth by feeding paupers. No, indeed. 'Give an apple to a man that owns an orchard'—that's my motto."

"But the Widow Graham is no pauper," suggested the old man.

"What does she trouble me with her wants for, then?"

"She doesn't trouble you. I am here without her knowledge; but, knowing you to be rich, I thought I would take the liberty of asking something in her behalf."

"Begone, old man, or I shall have you chastised. Come, take yourself off quickly, or I shall have you sent to the County Union House as a vagrant."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the old man. "Look out, Joseph, or you will get there first. Ha! ha! ha!"

Joseph was now thoroughly aroused, and sprang from his seat for the purpose of turning the intruder from the room. But he was gone.

Joseph rubbed his eyes, looked around, and seeing no one, exclaimed:

[RETURN OF THE WIDOW'S SON.]

"Dear me! how foolish I am to be startled by a dream! But, after all, I am glad it was only a dream."

"Ha! ha! ha!"

Joseph started again.

"That's the same mocking laugh I heard in my dream; but I am hardly awake yet, and it is only my imagination. The idea of that old fellow threatening me with the Union House—me! Joseph Norton, chairman of the Great Mogul Mining Company! Why, the idea is preposterous. But I'll not let it disturb me any more."

Saying this, he sat down again to dream of the untold wealth that would fill his coffers.

The Widow Graham sat alone in her humble cottage; tears fell thick and fast from her eyes, and her heart was bowed down with grief, as she contrasted her past joys with her present sorrows.

Two years ago that night, her only son had left her, to seek his fortune in a foreign clime, and never a word or line had come from him since he went away, and she made up her mind that he was dead.

Rap! rap! rap!

"Who raps at my door at this hour of the night?"

"A poor traveller, who has lost his way, and is weary and hungry."

The widow made haste to open the door, and there stood the same old man whom she saw not long since at the house of Joseph Norton.

"Come in, old man. My accommodations are poor, and my fare is humble; but such as it is, you are welcome to it."

The old man entered, and the widow gave him a seat by the fireside, and placed the remains of her supper before him.

"This bit of bread and these potatoes are all I have to offer you, and it is a poor treat for Christmas-eve. But, alas! it is all my house affords, and where my next meal will come from, God above only knows. Time was when every wish of my heart was granted, but all is changed now. Since my son went away, I—"

She stopped talking suddenly, for she perceived that the old man was asleep.

Christmas morn broke bright and clear! Mrs. Graham arose, and, going into the outer room, found her guest still there.

"A happy Christmas, good woman!" said he.

"Alas! old man, your wishes are vain. Happiness falls not to my lot; all is dark before me. I have not the wherewithal to procure one meal."

The old man drew a faded purse from his pocket and, handing it to her, said:

"Take this—you will find a few coins in it. Go and procure what you need; but use despatch, for my appetite is keen this morning."

The widow did as the old man desired. Upon her return, the first person who greeted her eyes was, not the old man, but a more youthful form, who sprang up on her entrance, and throwing his arms around her, exclaimed:

"A merry Christmas, my own dear mother!"

It was her long absent son, whom she had mourned as lost, returned to comfort her in her declining days. As soon as she recovered from her surprise, she turned to look for the old man, but he was gone.

She questioned her son about him, but he had not seen him. She then related the whole story to him, and said:

"It is strange he has departed without his breakfast; and here is his purse, with some change still in it. I will see how much there is."

She proceeded to empty the contents on the table, and out fell one gold piece after another, until the table was literally covered with them. The widow looked amazed, but her son said:

"Mother, that old man was Krisskingle, and this is his gift. We shall, indeed, have a happy Christmas."

That same morning Joseph Norton took up the paper, and read:

"Total failure of the Great Mogul Mining Company."

The paper fell from his hand, and he exclaimed:

"I am, indeed, a ruined man!"

About an hour later his house was discovered to be on fire, and ere noon it was reduced to a heap of ashes.

Joseph was now without a home, and no friends to sympathize with him. Those who had shared in his prosperity turned away and passed him coldly by, now that trouble had come upon him, and no door but the poor-house was open to him.

And now, I would ask all who read this apology, and are blessed with an abundance of this world's goods, in the midst of their Christmas festivities to remember to give something to the poor widow over the way, lest, like Joseph, they be accounted unfaithful stewards, and be relieved of their stewardship. And to those who have little, I would say: "Give even of that little to some poorer brother, and perchance, like the widow's gift, it shall be returned to you fourfold."



THE WARNING VOICE.

By the Author of "Mrs. Larkell's Boarding School," "Man and his Idol," &c.

CHAPTER LXVI

PREPARATIONS.

"There is no reason why we should not wed."
"Then for God's sake," she answered, "both our sakes,
So you will wed me, let it be at once."

Tennyson.

EARLY in the new year the fashionable papers gratified their readers with paragraphs headed "On dit," and whispering that Ormond Redgrave, Esq., only son of the late Right Hon. Pemberton Redgrave, of Whitecrofts, Cheshire, was about to lead to the hymeneal altar, the Lady Beatrice, daughter of Lord Ingarstone, of Ingarstone.

If the brother of the lady mentioned could have had his way, his name and Dora's would have appeared in a similar announcement. He was anxious, he said, that Ingarstone should witness the interesting ceremony of a double wedding on the same day. It would be so charming! Perhaps in her heart of hearts, Dora Redgrave thought so too; but a sense of duty made her refuse to agree to the arrangement.

"My first duty is to my mother," she said.

And there was no affectation in this. Lady de Redgrave really was too ill to be left to the care of hired nurses. That journey to the sea-side appeared at first to have been beneficial to her. While she remained at Worthing her health was unusually good; or rather it was up to the night of that conversation with Ingarstone about Morris Holt's late wife. After it, she grew feverish, restless, unnaturally excited, really ill. This state of things continued till they left Worthing. Nor did the lady mend. Seeing this, Ormond suggested that the calm and repose of the country might be beneficial; and at his solicitation his mother permitted herself to be removed to Ingarstone, where the wedding was to take place. His own idea was that her ladyship would take an interest in the preparations, and forget her own ailments, in the contemplation of his happiness. Nor in this, as it happened, had he reckoned without his host, though, strangely, of all topics, that of her son's wedding most disturbed and pained Lady de Redgrave.

Nobody knew this, no one suspected it—except Dora. In her case it was only a surmise, and she attributed what she saw to the most obvious causes. What more likely, she argued, than that bustle and excitement should tell unfavourably on one so long accustomed to seclusion? Under this impression she

[FLACKER'S TETE-A-TETE WITH CAPTAIN REDGRAVE.]

alluded as seldom as possible to her brother's approaching wedding, and never to her own. Still she could not quite banish the subject from the invalid's room. It pervaded Ingarstone like the air. It affected the sick lady as it affected everybody else; but with this difference, that while to the rest it was a source of rejoicing, to her it was simply overpowering. She needed constant care and attention.

How then could Dora quit her side?

The view she took, was the only one for a fond, devoted daughter. She could only reply to Cecil's impatient pleadings as she did reply—her first duty was to her mother.

In the abstract, Cecil admitted this, yet the gentle, self-sacrificing girl observed with dismay the effect which disappointment was producing on her lover.

That it was disappointment, she had no doubt.

From that night at Worthing, when the strange figure had appeared in the garden, and had vanished so mysteriously into the gloom of night, a change had come over Cecil Ingarstone.

It was this change that Dora observed, and attributed to the line of conduct she had felt compelled to adopt. She could not attribute it to anything else. She knew of nothing else at all likely to produce it.

Once, indeed, the question had flitted across her brain:

"Had that apparition anything to do with it?"

The mental answer was prompt.

"Absurd!" she had ejaculated, and there was an end of the matter.

Perhaps her thoughts might have wandered for a moment to the facts of that night. She might have remembered that the subject was discussed at dinner; but very slightly—more slightly than its singularity appeared to warrant. She might have recalled that, in answer to everybody's question, "Who was that?" Ingarstone had replied, "That's the point!" and when Ormond had said, "The fellow was the very image of your lordship," he had answered with a sneer and a laugh, "Gad! I hope not!"

It was possible, too, that there flitted across her brain the fact, that on that night Ingarstone called Cecil into his bedroom, and the low grumble of their voices was audible far on into the night.

All this, it is just possible, recurred to Dora in a dim, hazy manner; but as it came, so it passed away, almost unheeded.

It was so much more natural to believe that Cecil's melancholy, his occasional abstraction, his restless nights, the sudden flushes that suffused his face with crimson and left him deadly pale, were the symptoms

of disappointment, telling upon an ardent temperament.

All this while the preparations for the single wedding were being pushed on as rapidly as possible.

Telegrams were constantly passing between Ingarstone and fashionable West End tradesmen.

A well-known jeweller in New Bond Street, was, it was rumoured, working night and day at the diamonds for the bride. These included a tiara—the design, field flowers, with flowering grasses—the gift of Lord Ingarstone; a necklace and earrings, the bridegroom's gift; bracelets, presented by Cecil Ingarstone; and a superb brooch, matching the tiara, Dora Redgrave's gift. In addition to this, the bride's own diamonds, increased in quantity by the addition of those of her lost mother and poor Lady Lydia, had to be re-set, in the modern style, so as to render the *parure* complete.

Next in importance came the *modiste*, to whom was entrusted the bridal *trousseau*, or outfit. A French house was, of course, selected, the aristocracy having very little faith in the power of an English establishment to "turn out" a wedding. The lady presiding over it was as proud as a princess, as imperious as a royal mistress; kept her brougham, called herself an *artiste*, affected to bring the laws of *Fine Art* to bear upon her work; promulgated her decrees through a female prime minister, who was her sole organ of communication with the common workpeople, and, in short, "fooled" herself and those about her to "the top of her bent." Nevertheless, the results were very satisfactory in a millinery point of view; and favoured individuals, who got a peep at the *trousseau* in its complete state, declared, with upturned eyes and raised hands, that "It was the sweetest, loveliest thing imaginable! So chaste—and so expensive!"

The preparations for the wedding by no means ended here.

There was the house for the young couple to be secured and furnished, carriages and horses to be bought, plate to be ordered, wines to be laid in, and all the arrangements for the wedding tour to be made.

A wedding is like a revolution in a family; and a wedding in high life involves an amount of preparation, of which those in lower circles happily never dream.

To these preparations Ormond Redgrave gave himself up with alacrity. It was his desire that everything should be done in a manner worthy of his name and lineage. By a singular infatuation, he did not regard himself as deriving any honour from the alliance with the Ingarstones. His family was older than theirs: had included dukes, barons, and lords among its representatives. And if, by the failure of

direct issue, it had come to pass that he was reduced to plain Ormond Redgrave—what of that? It was the fate of ancient families to come to this; but that was no reason why the untitled representative should not rank as highly—in his own esteem and respect—as the proudest noble of the land.

Redgrave did so.

He felt that an alliance with his family was a distinction to be coveted by the greatest houses. And all that he was anxious about was that everything should be done on his part in a manner worthy of himself.

Attention to this kept him closely in town, and thus the Lady Beatrice had plenty of leisure to contemplate the step she was about to take. This she did with a sense of the deepest satisfaction, for she truly loved Ormond Redgrave. The feeling of her heart towards him was essentially different to any thing she had experienced in regard to Andrew Nolan, though she had both admired and esteemed him. His manly beauty, and frank, unaffected, sea-man-like qualities had greatly won upon her. She had liked; but she had not loved him.

And what language can describe the difference between those two feelings?

The new feeling—the passionate interlinking of her very being with that of her lover—ought to have resulted in unalloyed happiness. And it would have done; but that the thought of Nolan's misery, and a suspicion that he had been treated with scant justice, and no consideration, fell like a shadow across her path.

Somewhat it happened that during these weeks of busy preparation he was constantly in her mind.

She would start up in the dead silence of night with his name on her lips, and a vague terror of him in her heart.

Often, too, while she contemplated with a hopeful gaze the bright future opening before her, a cloud would steal over it, and would unaccountably link itself with Nolan—with his name—with words he had used—and with pity for his misery ever welling up in her heart.

One day, Ormond, who happened to be down at Ingarstone, discovered her in tears, and, naturally surprised, asked the cause of her distress.

"I would rather not tell you, Ormond," she said.

He looked grave.

She saw at a glance how her silence might be misconstrued by a jealous lover.

"Oh, it is not because I wish to conceal anything from you," she said; "but the feeling is only a transient one, and it is useless to distress you with it. Besides, you will not sympathize with it—I doubt if you will even understand it."

"May I try?" he asked, with a smile.

"If you wish it—yes," said Beatrice. "It is in my nature, Ormond, to be sensitive about giving pain or offence, and to retain impressions with great vividness. Bear these two peculiarities in mind, and you will understand how it is that I am always agitated when I think of Andrew Nolan."

"The beggar!" burst out the young man, with jealous impetuosity, and not without expressing supreme contempt.

"Don't mistake me, Ormond—pray don't mistake me," pleaded Beatrice, seeing the storm she was raising; "there is no emotion in my breast towards poor Nolan which can be construed into disloyalty to you. I do not love him; but I do pity him. Try, darling, to realize his position as I realize it. Put yourself in his place. Fancy yourself the honoured guest in my father's house, and the accepted suitor of his daughter's hand. Then imagine a thunderbolt falling in the midst of your happiness—you are accused of a terrible crime—you are acquitted; but the taint of the charge still clings to your name—you are coolly dismissed, and as you go you perceive another already enjoying the position from which you are thrust. Think of this as happening to a tender, loving, noble-hearted man, and tell me if he does not deserve my warmest pity and commiseration."

"No!" said Ormond, promptly.

"No?"

"For this reason—he has only met the just reward of his presumption in daring to lift his eyes so high. Who is he? What is his family? Grandfather a knight—not even a baronet—father an admiral! Pardon me, Beatrice; but your sympathy is thrown away on such—such nobodies. You might as well weep over the love-lorn distresses and despairs of John the footman or Mary the cook."

Her ladyship listened, but was not convinced. She still pitied Nolan—still shuddered when she thought of him.

In truth, she had little sympathy with Ormond's infatuation in the matter of birth. It was the one point on which they did not agree. Her goodness and gentleness made her less exclusive than those of rank usually are. What is it the poet says of his heroine?—

O Maid were sure of heaven if lowliness could save her.

The same might have been said of Beatrice Ingarstone with equal fitness. She never forgot her position; but she did not regard it in the light that Ormond did. In a word, she never yielded to that strangest and most absurd of infatuations, that a man who is able to trace his descent for a thousand years, is any better than the man who, having the descent—and we all have that—is unable to trace it back beyond his grandfather.

On returning to her chamber, after the conversation with Redgrave, Beatrice sat for a time thinking it over, and was still thus engaged when her maid, Aggy Crofts, came smiling in.

She said nothing; but her face spoke volumes.

The mistress, looking up, observed the black eyes twinkling, and the ruddy cheeks shining with suppressed delight.

"What is it, Aggy?" she asked.

"Oh, my lady, he's come home!" cried Aggy.

"He?"

"Tim, my lady. Come back to his father's house, for all the world like the prodigal son, my lady. A sittin' by the old man's side. Oh, so beautiful!—snatched out of the jaws of death! Just like a dream!"

In the excess of her delight, the poor girl hardly knew what she said. Her ideas and her words came tumbling one over the other in this strange fashion. But one thing was clear—she was brimful of joy.

The heart of the mistress caught the infection. Her kindly feeling made her a sharer in the other's joy. For an instant, Redgrave's sneer crossed her mind; then she asked herself, in her common-sense way, why she should not sympathize with the joys and sorrows of those of her own household? And, as the practical answer to that question, she said:

"I should like to see him."

"To see Tim, my lady? Oh, my lady—it is—it is—like a dream!"

But in sober, waking reality, she soon found herself walking by her ladyship's side, as they crossed the park, and made for Morris Holt's cottage.

The door was half-open; and Aggy, waiting for nothing in the exuberance of her delight, burst in, almost dragging her lady with her.

A pleasant scene presented itself. The familiar kitchen seemed to have thrown off its gloom. A bright fire burned in the grate; the swinging kettle sang its pleasant song; the grey cat, coiled in a ring, basked in the warmth. On one side the fire sat Morris Holt, his eyes still affected, as he would have persisted in saying, by the wood-smoke, but a happy smile playing about his lips. Opposite him was seated his eldest boy, poor Tim, so long a despised and miserable outcast, but now restored to his father's heart and hearth. And at his feet Janet Leeson occupied a low stool, from which she could look up into his face, while she held his hand as if she could never bear to trust him from her sight again. Pale and wan she still looked; but the light of joy shining in her face made it touching and very beautiful.

As the Lady Beatrice entered, all rose, partly out of respect, partly from the impulse of astonishment. She entreated them to be seated; and then, accepting a chair herself, expressed, in a few, simple, touching words, her regret for the calamities which had overtaken poor Tim and the suffering Janet, and her trust that brighter days were in store for them.

The hearts of the poor are soon touched, and it is no disparagement to the simple souls then present to say that their eyes were wet with tears as they listened. Even Aggy, as she stood apart with Curly, who had come in from the garden on seeing them enter, put the corner of her shawl to those bright, sharp, restless black beads of hers, which assuredly were not "given to the melting mood."

"I don't know how to thank you, my lady, for all your goodness," faltered Tim, his heart prompting him to speak in spite of his quivering lips. "I'm that thankful, my lady—and father here—and Janet, and—and—Curly here—and—and—"

Then he fairly broke down.

It was at this moment that there was a knuckle-rap at the door—a smart and yet subdued rap. Aggy, being nearest, opened it, and they heard a voice as subdued as the rap, asking for Morris Holt.

"You cannot see him," they heard Aggy say. "He is busy. Is that letter for him?"

"Yes—to be given into his own hands."

"Nonsense! I'll give it him."

"No. 'Into his own hands.' They were the words."

Annoyed at the interruption, the old man went out, remained a few moments, then returned, with a surprised look on his face and a note in his hand.

Beatrice, happening to glance up, saw that the note was enclosed in an envelope of a peculiar colour and shape, such as she had purchased in London a few days before. It struck her as singular, since the envelope was the last Parisian novelty, and all her packets were locked up in her envelope-box.

"I suppose some one has anticipated my 'nervely'—was the thought that flowed through her mind. It must have been so, for she had not taken a single envelope from the packet."

Yes—stay!

She had taken out one, which she had given to Lady de Redgrave, as a curiosity.

While these thoughts were in her mind, Morris Holt put the note on the mantel-piece, intending to read it when the visitor was gone.

The visitor's eyes involuntarily followed that movement.

Then, as the direction of the note faced her, she recognized, with a flush of surprise, that it was in Lady de Redgrave's handwriting!

"Why should Lady de Redgrave write to Morris Holt?"

It was natural for Beatrice to ask herself that question. Lady de Redgrave was a stranger at Ingarstone: how should she even know the man she was addressing?

Without being suspicious, and without wishing unduly to pry into the affairs of others, Beatrice Ingarstone found herself pondering over this mystery.

And as she returned with Crofts, some quarter of an hour later, so as to be in time to dress for dinner, her thoughts still reverted to the note and its direction. She still asked herself:

"Why should Lady de Redgrave write to Morris Holt? And the letter to be given into no hand but his?"

CHAPTER LXVII.

CAPTAIN REDGRAVE.

Discuss unto me. Art thou officer,
Or art thou base, common and popular?
Pistol, in Henry V.

THE same papers which circulated the *on dit* about the marriage for which such busy preparations were being made, contained an advertisement, which had appeared at intervals for some weeks past.

It ran in these words:

"IF MORTIMER REDGRAVE (commonly known as Captain Redgrave) will communicate with the advertiser, he will hear of something to his advantage. Address: A. N., care of G. P. Flacker, Little Figg's Row, E.C."

One evening, Beatrice Ingarstone happened to glance at this, and called Ormond's attention to it.

"What does it mean?" she inquired.

Ormond blushed up to the roots of his hair.

"That is more than I can tell you," he replied; "but I can tell you who it is addressed to. Don't you recognize my ricketty cousin, the captain? I have told you of him?"

Beatrice thought a moment.

"It was he who was in India?" she returned, faintly recalling some communication Ormond had thought proper to make in enumerating the very brief list of his relations.

"He was," returned the young man. "His friends bought a commission for him; he went out to India, got into disgrace with his colonel, and has been an idle rover ever since. I suppose I must call him the disgrace of the family—he certainly is not its ornament. But you needn't be in much fear about him. Beaty. He has one great and shining merit—he keeps his disgrace to himself, and has never, to my knowledge, troubled the family with it. I haven't seen him these twenty years, and he was a boy then."

Beatrice was silent for a moment.

"You think I ought to be more explicit with you about Mortimer and his foibles?" asked the lover, quickly.

"Surely it was not necessary?" was the rejoinder. "I was only thinking that I had seen this announcement before, and I was wondering why he is so indifferent about what is to his advantage."

Ormond laughed.

"Suppose he has grown incredulous of anything being to his advantage?" he asked.

"You think nothing will ever do him any good?"

"I knew that nothing ever has," was Ormond's reply.

Here for a moment the subject dropped; but Beatrice still held the paper in her hand, and her eyes were fixed on the advertisement.

"Did you notice," she said, at length, "who your cousin is requested to communicate with?"

"No. Who?"

She handed him the paper.

"Flacker!" he exclaimed, reading; "why, this is the man who called himself Ximena's solicitor."

"But who, there is every reason to believe, was her accomplice," added the lady.

"You think so?"

"I fear it. Holt's unfortunate son has no doubt but it was Flacker drugged him in the prison when he paid him a specious visit, and so arranged that the

diamond, which went so far to convict him, should be found in his possession."

"Incredible!" cried Ormond. "Yet he is certainly a most suspicious looking fellow. What can he have to communicate to Mortimer to his advantage?"

"What, indeed? I am—I confess—anxious to know."

Ormond did not make any remark in reply; but he pursued the subject in his own mind, and with an uneasy feeling for which he did not attempt to account.

At the very moment that this conversation took place at Ingarstone, the following scene transpired at Little Figgie Row, E.C.

It was there that Flacker had his office, or to speak more accurately, his brass-plate and letter-box, in the door, of which he rented a part. On the post of the door were three bell-handles, each one communicating with a different floor.

Now, on this evening, a tall person in an Inverness cape drew up in aansom, bounded out, took a rapid survey of the door, read aloud the several brass-plates on it, till he came to Flacker's name, and then tugged violently at the top bell. Tugged and waited. No answer.

"Wrong!" snarled the tall man. "Hang, and crash, and smash it!"

After which violent outburst, he rang the second bell—and waited. No answer.

"Wrong again! Confound it! Nuisance!"

And he rang the third bell.

Still nobody came.

Then he tugged at each knob in succession, and turning suddenly upon the cabman thought he perceived a smile on his face.

"Now, then!" he suddenly burst out, purple with rage, "what are you grinning at, fellow? Drop that! Or by—"

Before he could finish, the door behind him opened, and a slatternly woman, with a baby, made him a curtsy.

"What did you please to want, sir?" she mumbled.

"Want!" cried the frascible stranger. "What should a man want? Want attention, want civility. Come, and bother, and nuisance! Are you all dead and buried? Where's Flacker?"

"Out, sir."

"Out! Now in the name of all that's infamous. Scoundrel—blackguard—thief!—where is he?"

"I can send for 'm, sir."

"Where is he, I ask?"

"At the Shorn Lamb, sir. My little gal——" "I'll shear him! I'll lamb him! Your little girl can fetch him? Send your little girl. Bring him here this instant! Nuisance!"

The angry man threw himself into the house, to the manifest danger of the woman, drew out a swollen pocket-book, selected a card, and, holding it out, said:

"There! Read that. 'Captain Redgrave.' See? Off with you! Sty. Show me into Flacker's office!"

"He ain't got one, sir."

"What! What! No office?"

"Only the door, sir?"

"Eh? Do you mean to tell me that this Flacker doesn't live here—doesn't transact his business here—doesn't rent the place?"

"Nothing but the door, sir."

"What! To put his plate on? Oh, confound it—hang it—dang it! This is a facer! Nuisance!"

In his infinite disgust, he was fain to rush out of the house. Then he altered his mind, and bumped himself down on the stairs, expressing his determination to sit there till Flacker arrived. All the time he kept on in his fierce way, anathematising himself, Flacker, the house, the woman, the cab, the girl who had taken the message, and everything else that occurred to him as a possible "Nuisance!" At length, however, he yielded to the woman's invitation to him to go up and sit in her room; and, after looking out, and daring the cabman to move an inch from the door, for his life, bounded up-stairs.

The room was a miserable one—scantily furnished and most untidy; it was rendered still less inviting by lines stretched across from nail to nail, on which children's clothing were drying.

Captain Redgrave pronounced the place a detestable hole—the atmosphere mephitic, the drying clothes infamous, the woman a noodle, and the baby—no! He stopped short at the baby. To the mother's intense astonishment, he pronounced that a "bouncer," hoped it had been baptized, and put a shilling into its hand.

This moved the poor woman to tears. She hated him a minute before: now she felt as if she could have thrown her arms about his neck.

That demonstration was happily prevented by the opportune arrival of Flacker, who came hopping up the stairs, four at a time, in a manner quite his own. His arrival was preceded by a slight odour of rum-and-water.

"So, sir!" cried the captain, jumping down his throat, so to speak, before he could say a word, "you have come?"

"Come" is right," gasped Flacker, out of breath.

"You've had the confounded impudence, bare-faced audacity, brazen insolence to dare to face me—here! Here, sir, here!"

And he stamped his foot, and pointed to the floor, with a degree of violence at which Flacker was amazed.

"Well, captain, I'm at a loss, don't y' know——"

"At a loss! Hang and confound it! Is this your house? Speak, sir! Is it?"

"Speak" is right. No."

"Your office?"

"Yes—no."

"Have you part, lot, right, or interest in these confounded premises beyond your own square inches of the street-door?"

"Street-door" is right."

"Then, how dare you, sir? I say, how dare you take the liberty you have with my name? What right have you to put it in the filthy newspapers, to raise an infamous hue and cry after me, and to bring me miles upon miles to your dirty, paltry, iniquitous, mendacious street-door?"

"I thought it to your advantage, don't y' know——" began Flacker.

"My advantage!" burst in the fiery captain. "Who made you a judge of my advantage? What have you to do with my advantage? Advantage or disadvantage, gain or loss, right or wrong, what are my affairs to you? Have I ever asked your advice or assistance? Have I ever done anything to warrant your interference? Never! Then show dare you, sir? You've been guilty of a piece of gross impertinence. You've taken an unwarrantable liberty with my name. You've dragged me out of the bosom of my family, and brought me to this hole in a shameless, brazen, abominable manner; and by the Lord! you shall pay for it, sir! Pay for it, I tell you! Pay—pay—pay!"

He thrust his nose right in the face of the over-matched Flacker, clenched his fist, and so followed him round the room.

The woman with the child was terrified.

"Oh, don't go for to do him no harm, cap'n!" she cried out.

"Leave us, Smithers," said Flacker.

"Don't!" shrieked the captain.

She looked with a terrified face from one to the other—then hesitated, irresolute; but presently, seeing an opportunity, stole out.

Flacker, meanwhile, had got his turn.

"Pay" is right," he gasped; "but come, captain, listen to reason, don't y' know?"

"I won't," said the captain, flatly.

"Yes, you will. Here on purpose. Curiosity roused. Knew it would be. Little disappointed at the sort of place you find us in. Natural—very. Now, then, business—business."

He pointed to a chair, and took one himself.

But Captain Redgrave was not so easily put down.

"No! Nuisance! No!" he exclaimed, all in a breath. "No, Mister Flacker. Wrong sow by the ear this time, as you'll find, sir. If I don't have your miserable, pettyfogging carcass up before the Lord Mayor, for this liberty with my name, and this vile, atrocious, brazen attempt to entrap me into—Lord knows what—I'm not Captain Redgrave. So look out, sir—look out!"

And he turned, as if going.

Flacker caught hold of his flying cape, and restrained him.

"Don't go, captain," he exclaimed. "First hear—then judge. I have something to tell you to your advantage. No sham. Fact. No mistake about it. Fact."

The captain looked at him over his shoulder.

"Out with it, then! Come!" he said, sharply.

"Out with it" is right," said Flacker; "but I must first explain. Must, indeed. Sit down. No harm done either way by that, don't y' know? Delicate matter, I can tell you; delicate and dangerous, too. But it may put a fortune into your hands; and if it does, I'm sure you won't let me lose by it. But that's neither here nor there. Sit down."

The captain complied.

"Good," said Flacker, rubbing his hands, and looking round to see whether they were alone. Then, bending forward, he continued, "Every family has its mystery——"

"False! Wrong! Mine hasn't!" the captain shouted.

"Hasn't" is wrong," said Flacker, with emphasis. "If it hadn't, you wouldn't be here. If it hadn't, I should have no more interest in it than in any other family. But it has, and on that all turns. 'All' is right. You're a cousin—Ormond Redgrave, don't y' know."

"Proud—stuck-up—imperious—detestable! Nuisance!" ejaculated this loving kinsman.

"Nuisance" is right. Stands between you and the family property, doesn't he?"

"And what then?"

"Last of the direct line, isn't he?"

"Hang it, man! What then, I ask ye?"

"What then?" is right. Now, suppose——"

"I won't. I refuse to suppose anything. Why should I? What's the use? He is the man. I'm not. No supposing will make me the man and him not. All stuff—nonsense—balderdash!"

Flacker shifted his long legs so as to bring his face close to the captain's—so close that the latter gave an involuntary start—and then said:

"What if we could make out that Ormond Redgrave is——"

The rest of the sentence was given in a low, hissing whisper.

Captain Redgrave just heard it; and then, bounding from his seat, caught Flacker by the collar of his coat, laying one hand on each side, and shook him till his bones rattled again.

"You vile, miserable, audacious, pettyfogging humbug!" he shouted out. "You have the impudence to slander members of my family in this way! You have the brazen assurance to try and make me the accomplice of your infamy and atrocity! Execrable wretch. I hate and detest and revolt at you! Go, sir! And when next you try to get a victim into your infamous toils, take care that he isn't an officer and a gentleman."

With this he threw the astonished Flacker from him with a force that sent him spinning across the room, at the further extremity of which he fell with a crash.

Without heeding him any more than if it had been a dog he had thrown from him, Captain Redgrave strode from the room, down the stairs, and out of the house. His teeth were set, and his cheeks purple with rage.

"The infamous, mendacious, and slanderous wretch!" he kept muttering to himself as he rode through the streets, until his wrath had cooled down a little.

When it had, and he began to reflect more calmly on what had happened, it struck him that he might have been a little less hasty.

"Dash it—hang it—nuisance!" he ejaculated more than once. "I might as well have heard what the fellow had to say."

And on reflecting, he ordered the cabman to drive back to the house.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE WEDDING-DAY.

So these were wed and merrily rang the bells: Merrily rang the bells, and they were wed.

Enoch Arden.

God bless 'em: marriages are made in heaven!

Aylmer's Field.

INGARSTONE—we speak of the mansion and its surrounding village—was full of life and animation on the morning of Wednesday in the second week in January.

The morning itself was superb, clear, fresh, and invigorating, crowned with a heaven of the purest blue, and as full of sunshine as if spring had already come.

To add to the cheering effect, the bells of the old Norman church, not a mile from the mansion, were set ringing almost from sunrise. It was understood that the change-ringers were executing some wonderful feat in the triple-bob-major, or other professional line; but all that the uninitiated knew was that the bells rang merrily, cheering the hearts of all who listened to them. Cheering? Yes; and saddening, too, for the sound of bells at their merriest begets a pleasing melancholy in the mind.

This might elucidate a fact, which they could not account for—namely, that half the women in the village indulged in the luxury of tears that morning. Inconsistently, the men thought. But, then, what do men know about these things?

However, smiling faces, and sparkling eyes, and joyous, lightly-ringing voices there were in abundance. The young and light-hearted were boisterous in their gaiety, and even the tearful of the gentler sex smiled through their tears.

There was not a heart all the country round that did not expand with good wishes for the fair Beatrice Ingarstone on this her wedding-day.

At the mansion the anxiety, preparations and excitement of weeks past had reached a climax.

The fine old building itself had a festive air about it, from the hall-steps, covered with scarlet druggat, up to the very pinnacle of the bell tower, from which a flag streamed and fluttered in the light breeze.

The great drawing-room was filled with exotics which had cost a fortune, and otherwise decorated for the reception of the guests. The little drawing-room was devoted to the presents of the bride, armuged on

a sort of altar in its midst. The dining-room had been brightened up, and was sacred to a wedding breakfast (including the bride-cake), such as was never heard of for splendour out of a fairy tale. The bed-chambers and dressing-rooms were occupied by the bridesmaids and their attendants. Even Cecil's own room was given up for this purpose, and he was fain to content himself with an attic, from which he was compelled to emerge, and ring the great dinner-bell, which he had ordered up, over the bannisters whenever he wanted to summon his valet.

Into the bride's own apartments we shall not be rash enough to venture. Enough, that through the half-open door one could get occasional peeps at what appeared to be a fountain of lace, flowing in light and beauty, about the image of a nymph.

That was the bride.

Adjoining was the room appropriated to Lady de Redgrave. Her ladyship's health had improved at Ingarstone, during the last day or two, and she had announced her intention to accompany the bridal party to church.

For this purpose she had assumed a dress of silver gray moire; and as her white, naturally-waving hair took little time to arrange, and she had recourse to few of the mysteries of the toilet, she was ready early, and sat at the window to watch the busy scene in the park. To watch also for the arrival of the bridegroom, her beloved Ormond, who was expected from London, with his best man, and other grooms, by an early train.

A little agitation is natural in a mother at such an hour. Lady de Redgrave was painfully agitated, nervous, excited, and impatient.

"The secret is mine—mine only," she murmured after a while, speaking evidently to relieve her overcharged breast. "With me it has lived—with me it will die. Why do I tremble then? Alas! at my time of life sins are heavier to bear than in the heyday of thoughtless youth. And I am adding to the weight of mine! This ceremony complicates everything. It deepens the consequences. It makes retreat impossible. And one word from me would end all! One word; but that word would doom my boy to misery, and sunder these loving hearts for ever. No, no! Surely it is a less sin to keep silence? A wrong unknown is unfeared. It is I alone who must bear the burden, and I must do it—for his sake!"

As she ceased, there was a soft tap at the door.

She tottered towards it, and opened it with her own feeble hand, and with a manifest trepidation. She whispered to the applicant to come in, and hastily closed the door as Morris Holt stepped into the chamber.

Her ladyship's eyes were eagerly raised to his stern face.

"Well? You have sought?" she ejaculated.

"Yes; my lady."

"And with what result?"

"None."

"You have found nothing? No papers?"

"Not a scrap."

"And you are sure, quite sure that you have searched thoroughly?"

"High and low, my lady. It took me all night, pretty nigh. But 'twas no use. None."

The hopeful, eager look died out of her ladyship's face, and she said, quietly:

"It cannot be helped, then. I thank you, Holt. I thank you very much for the trouble you have taken. Had you been successful, it would have relieved me from a great difficulty. As it is, if you will accept a trifle by way of recompense—"

She drew out her purse.

"I won't, my lady," interrupted Holt. "No offence—I'm a rough man, and speak my mind at all times, and—I won't. What I've done, I've done willingly; and you're quite welcome to my services."

"And you will remember my request?" asked the lady, timidly. "You will not mention this?"

"Not to a living soul."

"Thank you! You have conferred the greatest obligation on me, and—on my son!"

She had the handle of the door in her hand as she uttered these last words, and almost before she had finished, it was pushed open from without.

"Hallo!" cried a gay, ringing voice, "what's that about me, mother?"

It was Ormond who spoke; Lord Ingarstone looked over his shoulder.

At the sight of Morris Holt, both stared in not unnatural surprise. It was an awkward moment. Her ladyship faltered out she knew not what, while Holt bowed to his lord, and hung his head like a man detected in a crime. Ormond came to the rescue. He saw his mother's agitation; but was above suspecting her of an unworthy thought.

"You are busy, mother?" he said, respectfully.

"Oh, no!" she replied, with as much calmness as she could summon up. "Holt was just going"—Morris took the hint, and bowed himself out—"He

has had his trials, poor fellow!" the lady continued. "What a miraculous escape that of his son! The details are positively harrowing! And so, my darling, you have arrived? Ah, my lord, this is a happy day for me!"

Ingarstone, thus addressed, declared that it was a happy day for him also, "monsieur happy," upon his life.

But while Ormond embraced his mother with the utmost warmth and tenderness, and she clung to him with convulsive fondness, his lordship could not help asking himself a question:

"What is there between my lady and Holt that she should give him these secret interviews? Strange! Is it dangerous?"

On this point he determined to consult Cecil at the first opportunity.

But this was no time to think of danger. The wedding hour drew near. The bells were ringing out, loud and boisterous. The sound of carriage-wheels below, in the park, was incessant. Merry voices and busy feet were sounding through the house, and the window commanded a view of a rapidly-increasing mass of villagers—all in their Sunday best, and all decorated with wedding favours—who had assembled to cheer the bride, and to gaze open-mouthed at whatever was to be seen.

Ormond had only come to see his mother, to whom he was devotedly attached, and he now hurried away to join his friends, who were assembled at the Ingarstone Arms, every room of which had been engaged for the purpose. Their carriages were already drawn up before the door.

The bridegroom was to drive thence with his party to the church, there to await the bride and her attendants.

Eleven was the hour fixed for the ceremony; it was half-past ten when Ormond sprang from the carriage in which he had gone to Ingarstone, at the door of the inn.

A waiter came up, tugging at a lock of his hair, which hung loose for the purpose, and presented a card.

"Captain Redgrave!" cried the young man, in dismay. "Confound his impudence! Where is he?"

"Up-stairs, sir?"

"With my friends?"

"Yes, sir."

Burning with indignation, Ormond rushed past the waiter, and bounded up the stairs, three at a time. Then bursting into the room on the first floor, he presented himself before his astonished friends with gleaming eyes and inflamed cheeks.

Instantly a tall man, with a handsome, but rakish face, rose from a seat near the window, and advanced with extended hand.

"Ormond, my lad!" he exclaimed.

"Is this your card, sir? Are you the person named here?" demanded Ormond, fiercely.

"That is so. Captain Redgrave is my name," replied the other, smiling.

"It is false, sir, and you know it," Ormond retorted. "You have no more right to call yourself 'captain' than I have to wear the Order of the Garter. You have disgraced my family name, which you unfortunately bear, and you have rendered it ridiculous by putting this handle to it. And after that, you dare to thrust yourself into my presence!"

This attack was so thoroughly unexpected, that for the moment the sham captain had nothing to say, but his cheeks grew livid.

"You will repent this insolence, Ormond," he gasped out at length.

"And you will leave this room—instantly," shouted the young man.

"Take care!" cried the captain. "Hang me, but I came here with pacific intentions."

"Go, sir!"

"Had you received me as a gentleman, I would have used you as a kinsman."

"Begone, sir!"

"I would have compromised with you, and concealed your disgrace."

"What?" shrieked Ormond, fairly staggered.

"As it is, you have spurned, insulted, defied me, and, by Jingo, by Jupiter, I'll bring down your pride a peg. I'll crush you—I'll ruin you! I'll wipe off the blot from the family escutcheon, or—hang me—I'll perish!"

And, shaking his fist as he spoke, he backed out of the room.

Ormond looked round bewildered.

"What does he mean?" he inquired of the friends who had been spectators of this scene.

"I should say," replied his best man, Hardie, an old college friend, "that he was a little gone here," pointing significantly to his forehead.

The rest concurred, laughing as they did so, and in that laugh Ormond joined. But he was perturbed; the mere sight of this reprobate branch of the family had upset him, and the language used made him sick at heart.

Never did young and ardent bridegroom enter the carriage which was to convey him to the altar more perturbed in spirit.

The feeling, however, gradually subsided as they drew near the sacred edifice, and could discern the long line of carriages, with the bride and friends, approaching by another road, leading more directly from Ingarstone. It was gone, and the handsome face was clear and sunny, as he perceived his destined bride, leaning upon the arm of her father, approach the altar (at which he already stood) like a vision of light and beauty.

Never had Beatrice Ingarstone appeared so beautiful as she did on that day. The cloud which had rested upon her so long seemed to have vanished, swallowed up in the halo of love and happiness with which life seemed now surrounded. Her bridal attire became her superbly—was, indeed, a "miracle of success," as the French *artiste* who had designed it declared from her seat in the gallery. The spectators declared that she was "a perfect picture," and she was—the picture of an angel.

At sight of her, Ormond Redgrave's heart leaped in his bosom, and, with a gush of joy and gratitude, he thanked heaven for the treasure it had bestowed on him.

There is no need to describe the ceremony.

Except that it was choral, it differed not from other solemnizations of the same character.

At its close, Beatrice, blushing and tearful, but supremely happy, leaned on her husband's arm and accompanied him into the vestry, where the register was signed. Emerging thence, after a few minutes, the bridal party swept down the centre aisle, to the admiration of all present in the church, and they had got to the porch, when Ronch, Lord Ingarstone's little legal adviser, touched his arm—straining up towards him for the purpose, as far as he could reach—and handed him a parchment envelope.

His lordship glanced from it to the agitated face of the little man, and, without a word, tore it open.

A hasty glance informed him of the contents.

He gasped—grew red, grew pale.

Ormond, chancing to turn towards him, was startled at the expression which met his gaze.

"My lord, what ails you? Are you ill?" he exclaimed.

"Wretch!"

That was Ingarstone's answer.

(To be continued.)

Mr. MACLISE is far advanced towards the completion of his water glass picture representing the "Death of Nelson," which is one of the principal decorations of the Royal Gallery in the Houses of Parliament, and occupies the compartment on the wall which is opposite to the "Interview between Wellington and Blucher after Waterloo."

AN ODD WAY OF PAYING WAGES.—In the Norwegian mines, a singular custom is observed in paying the weekly wages of the men. They all present themselves on Saturday evening to the inspector, who, having settled accounts with each, bids him turn round, and writes in white chalk upon his black back the sum due to him. Thus numbered, the man goes to the cashier, who also turns him round to look at the figures, and pays him without having a word to say.

It is told with full detail, and every proof of veracity, that a young fellow made a heavy bet that he and his friend would eat eighty-three dozen of oysters. He warned them that his friend was a low, coarse fellow. *N'importe*, the spectators were willing to witness his performance and that of his friend. The layer of the bet ate a dozen, and then sent for his friend. He was introduced, well prepared for the feast, having been starved two days. The friend was an enormous pig, who made short work of the remainder of the oysters. The validity of the proceeding was discussed, and it was found that the sharp young man with the hoggish friend had rightly gained his money.

A GREAT bridge is proposed to be built across the Frith of Forth, superseding the existing railway ferry of Burntisland, and for the construction of which a bill is to be presented to Parliament in the ensuing session. The entire length of the proposed Forth bridge is 3,887 yards, which is somewhat under two miles and a quarter. It is proposed to form four great spans of 500 feet each over the navigable channel. The bridge will be on the lattice-girder principle. The girders, on which depend the stability of the structure, and which are usually about one-eighth to one-tenth of the span, will be 65 feet above the level of the rails. The piers are 125 feet clear of high water; the height of the girders are 65 feet, and allowing 5 feet for the base of the girder on which the rails will be laid, the total will be 195 feet, something like the height of Edinburgh Castle from Johnston-terrace. The actual height, including the submarine part of

the work, will be about a third more—namely, 18 feet of fluctuation of tide, 50 feet of water at ebb spring tide, and 25 feet of foundation—together, 93 feet, which, added to the visible height, gives a total of 288 feet—above the point of the tallest steeple in Scotland. The bridge on either side of the navigable channel will be constructed on a series of spans, lessening from 200 to 100 feet as they approach the shore. The piers of the great spans will be built of stone to the height of 10 feet above high water level, but the remainder of the bridge will be constructed of malleable iron. The engineer is Mr. Thomas Bouch.

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE GENERAL POST-OFFICE IN ST. MARTIN'S-LE-GRAND.—The application to Parliament, signed by the solicitor to the Post-office, for increased accommodation to that establishment, comprises the appropriation of the whole of the western side of St. Martin's-le-Grand, up to the Nottingham Castle, in Angel-street, to Bath-street on the west, and Newgate-street on the south; besides providing for a direct underground communication underneath the main thoroughfare. It is said to be the intention of the Treasury, when the bill is passed, to erect on part of the site a new Post-office Savings' Bank. Notices are being given to the owners of the premises required.

THE ARCHDUKE.

A TALE OF THE MEXICAN EMPIRE.

CHAPTER XXII.

So we are guarded from all enemies,
And shut in with sure friends.
For all must cheat me—or a face like this
Was ne'er a hypocrite's mask.

The remainder of the night on which such a crisis had occurred in Ada's destiny, was passed by the girl in a sort of waking trance. Her duenna endeavoured to console her and impart hope and comfort to her tortured heart, but she finally fell asleep, and her charge was left to herself.

"Who can I be, if I am not my father's—Senor Mar's daughter?" she thought, staring into the deep gloom of her chamber. "Who was the prisoner whom they have poisoned? What can be the secret of this ill-gotten wealth?"

Thoughts of Hernan mingled with these questions, but she felt too crushed and powerless to think again of escape that night, and a sense of her own inability to aid him increased her anguish.

And so the gloomy night wore away, and morning came.

It was still early morn when Mar came up to her room, and said:

"I heard you moving about, and thought I'd come and tell you that I am going to the city. The French have arrived, and have a great reception this morning, at which the count and I must be present."

Ada bowed, without speaking.

"Don't you wish me to bring you anything, or take any message to the count?" added Mar, regarding her closely.

She shook her head.

"Well, you need not be sullen," he responded. "I want you to smooth the lines out of your face, dress yourself handsomely, be cheerful, and not be moping in my absence. I shall probably bring the count back with me, and I once more declare to you that you must receive him as a suitor!"

"I can never obey you in this matter," Ada said, in a voice that quivered with her many emotions. "I do not like the count—I cannot endure his presence!"

"But you shall endure him!" cried Mar, angrily. "I've heard enough of your snivelling. Perhaps you think you'll run away, and gain admittance to that accursed guerrilla? If so, you can dismiss your hopes on that point. I have posted no less than four men about the hacienda, ostensibly to look out for Comanches, but in reality to see that you do not leave the premises. Moreover, I shall request the bishop, who will meet all his clergy this morning, to charge them not to marry you to anybody without my permission—not that you'll ever see Captain de Valde again," he added, "for he's as good as dead, and will never leave the prison to which the French will consign him until he is taken out to be shot! You see, therefore, that you are virtually a prisoner for the present, till you can satisfy me of your obedience to my wishes."

He repeated his stern injunctions and admonitions, paying no attention to the pleadings of the maiden, gave Dolores a few directions, and soon left them, and rode away at full speed towards the city.

It was a gloomy and terrible day that followed.

The maiden went out of doors, moving about the gardens, as was her custom, and promptly detected that she was under the surveillance of several of the servants most devoted to her reputed father.

So strict was this watch that she could not proceed near the limits of the surrounding grounds without

starting one of these watchers from his post of observation, and she finally returned to her room, weary, disgusted, and almost despairing.

Dolores was too full of anger all day to be capable of administering much consolation to Ada. In fact, the duenna regarded the posting of watchers about the place as directly tending to cut off the approach of Pacheco, whose lion heart, she doubted not, had brought him safely through the midst of his foes, and she accordingly raved of her rights, of her mistress's rights, and of the outrages that were being perpetrated upon them.

Eating little, unable to sleep, Ada passed a horrible day, thinking almost constantly of Hernan, and almost forgot in his expected doom her own persecutions and the other darkness of her lot.

As night came on, she went out to her favourite arbour, attended by Dolores, and here she sat for hours.

The duenna moved about enough to find that the watchers were still at their posts—had another spell of complaining—and then sauntered nervously about the grounds, keeping near her young mistress.

The misery at which Ada had arrived does not require any lengthy description. Her head was hot and aching, her face feverish, and her heart too full of anguish for tears.

Thus the hours passed, and it was near midnight.

She sat unheeding the weird and solemn beauty of the scene around her, when she was startled by a noise, as of some one creeping through the foliage and flowers.

Her heart quickened its throbbings, and she sprang to her feet with a low cry of terror.

"Is it you, Ada?" whispered a voice near her.

"Hush, darling—it is I!"

She turned in bewildered astonishment, and Hernan sprang into her presence, folding her to his heart in a passionate embrace.

"Oh, God! can this be possible?" cried Ada, in a perfect whirlwind of joy, "Am I dreaming?"

"Not at all, love. It is Hernan himself," responded her lover, drawing her to a seat upon the bench beside himself. "I have escaped and come to see you."

"Thank God!" sobbed Ada, the tears that had refused to come in her awful anguish now gushing forth, and relieving the pressure on heart and brain.

"But how did it happen?"

She nestled her glossy head in his bosom, while Hernan related the manner of his escape, and his subsequent meeting with General Navarro, adding:

"I left him on the road while I came towards the house. I found a man on the watch in the lawn, and concluded that you might be a prisoner; and so crept up cautiously and slowly in this direction, intending to proceed to the house, and in some way or other gain your presence."

"Dear Hernan," said Ada, tenderly caressing him; "I have been a prisoner here, and am now; only I have the range of the house and gardens. There are several men on guard, to watch me, lest I flee to you. Oh! I have needed you so much."

"And I have needed you," responded Captain de Valde, folding her closer to his breast. "You seem to know how I came to fall into their hands?"

Ada replied in the negative.

"On the day I left you," proceeded Hernan, "I went directly home, and found that my father had strangely disappeared—no one knew where. I immediately organized a search for him; and fearing I knew not what, I hastened the next morning into the hills to look for him. There I encountered the Count Vileto, and a band of villainous-looking men, strangely resembling ladrones, and the count ordered me to surrender. I refused, and he took me prisoner, after a brief conflict, and carried me to the French General Donai."

"Count Vileto then captured you?" interjected Ada. "Can he indeed be so treacherous—such a villain?"

"Yes, Ada; and, if I mistake not, much worse. I escaped, as I told you. But how pale you look, my darling!" and he held her sweet wan face up to his view in the starlight. "Have your imprisonment and mine banished all that colour so from your cheeks?"

"Yes," answered Ada; "and I can't bear to have you go away from me again, dear Hernan. I shall always be imagining that Count Vileto and others of your enemies are conspiring against you."

"And I cannot bear to leave you," he returned, with a fond embrace. "I shall think continually of you while I am labouring with General Navarro in his silver mine—for needing money so much, darling, I propose to join our strange acquaintance in mining in a branch of the Yeta Grande. I shall think that you are annoyed and persecuted by your father and Count Vileto. Would that you were now my wife. I should then feel as if the count would give over his schemes concerning you, and that your father, too,

would respect the sanction of the church. Will you go away with me to-night and be married?"

"I wish I could!" moaned Ada; "but, oh! Hernan, father said this morning—as if he had a prophetic view of this moment—that he should ask the bishop to warn all priests against wedding me to any one without his consent. Every avenue is closed against me."

"I wish, then," said the young man, after a sad and thoughtful pause, "that I could place you in my father's keeping, or in some place of security. But I know of none. My own roving life gives me little opportunity to protect you in any asylum we might select, even if we could find any one to keep you in opposition to your fathers' claims. I wish that we could be united," and his voice grew eager and tender, and he paused a moment, continuing more gravely; "but I see no way to bring it about."

"Nor I," said Ada. "We must recognize the fact, dear Hernan, that though our hearts are one, wedded indissolubly, yet father has fixed a deep gulf between us that we cannot cross."

Hernan groaned as he consented. It seemed hard to know how much they loved each other, and yet realize that they must be parted—that the dearest half of his being must be subject to another's will and persecutions.

"It is hard for me to bear," said the maiden, "for I long to be always with you, Hernan. My childhood was cold and loveless, though I longed for a loving word of tender caress—though my whole being yearned for tenderness, and received none. My father has treated me well in outward things always; has given me handsome clothing, books, jewellery, and more than all, a good instructress—my poor dead Carlota; but I have never been nearer or dearer to him than his favourite horse. And now, when the sunshine at last glids my path, I recoil from the future, lest it shall vanish."

Hernan kissed his betrothed with a passionate tenderness, while his emotion showed how deeply he was touched by her mention of her cheerless childhood.

"You shall never want for love again, my Ada," he said. "You possess my whole heart and soul, and nothing can ever rob us of our trust in each other."

Ada was silent a moment, and then said:

"I ought to tell you, Hernan, of an event that occurred here last evening, when I was about to escape to go to you."

She went on, describing the interview she had overheard between Mar and the strange woman, detailing all she had heard, even to the woman's dying words.

Hernan had hardly expressed his wonder and astonishment, when the duenna sauntered up to the arbour.

She uttered a faint scream on beholding our hero. "Captain de Valle!" she ejaculated. "How on earth did you get here?"

"I escaped," replied Hernan. "How is your health, Dolores?"

"I feel better than I have all day," said the duenna, with a snimper. "And so does Donna Ada."

"And where is Pacheco?" asked the captain, caressing Ada as he spoke. "I suppose he's told you both terrible stories."

"I have not seen him," returned the duenna. "Senor Pacheco has not been here since he left with you. He is probably in some dungeon—woe is me."

Hernan was surprised, but assured Dolores that Pacheco was undoubtedly safe, wherever he was, and she said:

"I'll watch these watchers, Captain de Valde, and warn you if anything occurs."

She had hardly stepped outside the arbour, when the sound of horses' hoofs were heard, mingled with the cry of voices, and Mar and Vileto dashed up the lawn at full speed, and rushed into the house.

The next moment they reappeared, and Mar inquired loudly of one of the guards the whereabouts of Donna Ida.

"She is not in her room," the lovers heard him say, in a voice hoarse with rage. "We have just come from Zacatacas. The accursed guerrilla-chief has escaped, and may have already carried the girl off! We must search for her!"

"You see," said Hernan, "the hue and cry is begun. I must go, but I will be sure to see you often, or send word to you. Be strong, darling. Be hopeful. I shall be safe at the mines. The villains will not capture me the second time, and you know that I shall never, never cease to love you!"

Mar and Vileto, attended by the guard, were already moving in the direction of the bower, and the lovers could not prolong their parting. Another hasty assurance or two, embraces and kisses, and the young patriot vanished.

"Ah! here she is!" said Mar, a moment later, with an air of relief, as he bounded into the bower, where Ada sat, rigid as a statue, and nearly as pale.

"She is not gone, and the outlaw has not had time to come here. Come with me, Ada," he added, taking her by the hand. "Your infernal guerilla has escaped in the most audacious manner; but he cannot long avoid the pursuers, and I'll keep you locked up in your room till he is recaptured!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

There are sorrows
Where, of necessity, the soul must be
Its own support! A strong heart will rely
On its own strength alone. In her own bosom,
Not in a father's arms, must she collect
The strength to rise superior to this blow.
I'll have her treated
Not as the woman, but the heroine!

"Do as you will," was Ada's reply to the unfeeling declarations of her reputed father. "I can bear all! He's free! he's free!"

"And he may thank the Evil One for his freedom," growled Mar. "Such a deed was never done before. Assaulted General Donal—locked him up—guards all around him—and walked away as calm as the snowy peak of Orizaba! Had his flight been delayed ten minutes, the counterstrain for the night would have been given to the French troops, and he would have been stopped. Never mind, however. We'll soon have him. No efforts will be spared. All Zacatecas is in pursuit of him!"

Thus speaking, he reached Ada's chamber, into which he thrust her, attended by Dolores; locking them in, and then returned to Viletto.

"You'll have to look out for her, my dear Mar," said the count, "or De Valde will pay her a visit. I think I'll hire those miners again—those fellows that aided me in looking for Ada—and spend a few days in searching for the fugitive. It's very essential, you know, to recapture him."

"You are right, my dear count," answered Mar. "Do your best, and let me have early news of your successes!"

The couple exchanged a few further remarks, and Viletto turned away, with a scheming light in his eyes.

"That 'Death Band' must be reorganized and strengthened," he muttered. "I may need it to protect myself, or to try foul means with her ladyship, should fair means fail me!"

He mounted the horse on which he had ridden from the city, and vanished in that direction.

"The accursed guerilla'll come here, of course," snarled Mar to himself, after his confederate had disappeared. "I'll collect my servants, and look out for him!"

He set about this measure.

It was now the dead of night.

Hernan had lingered to see what disposition would be made of Ada, and a bitter look had mantled his face as he saw her conducted towards the house, virtually a prisoner.

"Hunted—a fugitive!" he had ejaculated. "I cannot now aid her. I must be patient!"

What agony these reflections caused him!

While he lingered, unable to tear himself away, a body of French troops dashed up to the hacienda, coming from Zacatecas, and the officer in command addressed to Mar some inquiries and observations respecting the escaped guerilla.

"Is the hunt general?" asked Mar.

"Yes. We've sent a force to his father's residence, another towards Villa Nueva, and so on. The general is sworn to retake him and shoot him."

Hernan waited to hear some particulars of the search that was being made for him, and then returned to Navarro, to whom he announced all that he had discovered.

"Thinks look dark," he concluded. "My betrothed in captivity, my father so strangely missing, myself so fiercely hunted! Besides, Ada gave me a horrible revelation of family mysteries, an account which reminded me of your experiences, only the prisoner in the case was dead—"

The pursuers were heard in motion, hurrying away, and soon passed near the spot where the two men were concealed, going towards Fresnillo.

"I think we can avoid them," said Navarro. "I used to be familiar with this region, and can take paths it will puzzle the French to follow."

The couple mounted and hurried away, going northward; and Navarro continued:

"The mine we propose is situated near Fresnillo, a little off the Durango Road. Shall we proceed directly to it?"

"Yes, if you please," answered Hernan. "Like you, I can do nothing without money. I might borrow of my friends, but I see no prospect of repayment. If we find some silver, it might afford me immense relief, enabling me to raise men and search for father."

"We are in want," rejoined Navarro, "and the victims of wrong. Moreover, we have each been saved

from a horrible fate; and I dare hope that a kind Providence will be with us."

Hernan echoed the pious trust, and the two men rode briskly on in the darkness.

"Do you think the road is open?" asked Hernan, at length. "I heard to-day that General Castigny is marching on Fresnillo with his division."

"And so he is," rejoined Navarro. "The main road between us and Fresnillo is full of his troops. We will take by-paths, be cautious, and avoid them."

Hernan resigned himself to Navarro's guidance, remaining thoughtful and silent.

He had been too excited, when listening to Ada's revelations, to appreciate them at their full value. He had reflected, moreover, that the dying declaration of the strange woman might have been prompted by revenge or occasioned by delirium. On the whole, being jealous of the maiden's good name, and having a horror of everything that could be regarded as scandal, he concluded to say nothing more to Navarro about the startling communications she had made to him.

After some alarms and many fatigues, the travellers neared Fresnillo, which is one of the most flourishing mining centres of Mexico, thirty-five miles north-west of Zacatecas.

"We must have something to eat, said Navarro, as day dawned, "and a disguise for each of us. I'll visit the next but we see."

He did so, securing for two days a couple of picks and shovels, and a suit of mining clothes for himself and Hernan.

"All obtained without imperilling us," he explained. "I bought them of a lone widow, deaf as a post, who thinks that Santa Anna is still president. The clothes were her husband's, who was a miner in the hill of Croano."

They ate their breakfast and disguised themselves, resuming their way, like a couple of unemployed miners on a prospecting tour. Hernan's face was dark and troubled, his thoughts being of his imprisoned betrothed, and he said but little.

"Cheer up, my dear young friend," finally said Navarro. "We will find some silver; you will collect troops, find your father, and again fight the invaders. The day will come when you can free the young lady and be happy. Think of my fifteen years of imprisonment, and of my lost family. Remember that the darkest hour is that which precedes the dawning. Courage!"

Hernan smiled sadly.

"What hope and energy you still possess!" he murmured. "If you will tell me something about mines and miners as we proceed, I will be glad to listen. I confess that I am not very well informed on the subject, not having given much attention to it."

"Very good," said Navarro. "As is known to everybody, the silver mines of Mexico are the richest in existence. They furnish, from year to year, two-thirds of all the silver that's added to the specie in the world. They are contained in great veins which extend hundreds of miles through the table plains, much as the arteries traverse the human body. Think of these great rivers of silver, bedded in the hills and valleys of the Sierras, lying quiet here from all eternity, waiting for eyes and shovels to bring them to light, and not yet one-hundredth part known or discovered!"

"The thought is enchanting!" responded Hernan, brightening.

"Yes; perfectly bewildering. No wonder the French emperor lost his reason in contemplating our mineral riches! He argued to himself that he could subjugate us, take possession of the principal mines, secure millions upon millions of dollars from them, build railroads, and, in short, found a French colony, to serve as a check on home conspiracies, and afford him a retreat in case of his being driven from France. The civil war in the United States of America gave him an opportunity of entering upon this scheme, and the French-Austrian farce is the result of his efforts."

Navarro bent a wary glance around, his path being near the main road, and resumed:

"The principal veins are the *Veta Madre* and the *Veta Grande*, the first in Guanajuato, and the last in Zacatecas. The former has been opened for fifteen miles along the strata, and in some places is two hundred feet wide. The latter has been tapped at Zacatecas, Fresnillo, and Sombrerete, and averages twenty-five or thirty feet in width. These veins are not continuous, but are often interrupted, distorted, splintered edgeways, upheaved, or depressed. In some places the vein is cut off by a wall of granitic rock, several hundred feet thick, to reappear again, in regular continuation, beyond this barrier. In other places the vein is thrown upward, at a greater or less inclination, and frequently crops out on the surface, as was the case with the great mine of Potosi. You remember how that was discovered?"

"Yes. An Indian was chasing a goat up the moun-

tain, and caught hold of a bush to assist him. The bush gave way in his grasp, denouncing a rock of the precious metal. But silver is not always found pure?"

"No. It is generally greatly alloyed—diffused in rocky ore. The two exceptions are: when it is found in lumps, called native silver, as at Potosi, and when it is found in rotten veins, or veins in which the alloy has been decomposed by action. Lumps of pure silver, exceeding a ton in weight, have been found, and lumps of several hundred pounds each are common."

"I'd like a few of those lumps," exclaimed Hernan, with increased interest. "What's the law respecting a mine, if we find one?"

"Well, any person, whether a native or a foreigner, who finds a mine, becomes the proprietor of the same, no matter who may own the land on which it is discovered. The conditions of proprietorship are that the finder must 'denounce' the discovery at the mining courts, keep at least four men constantly employed, and fulfil some other obligations. A claim extends two hundred yards on the surface, and the same distance in depth. When a man descends a mine, he loses all right and title to it, and any new owner can take possession. Formerly, when the government required a tax, many mines were worked in secret, and such is still the case, in some cases, through fear of rivalry or the Indians. As for us, if we find a mine, we will keep silent about it, and work it in as much secrecy as possible."

Hernan nodded assent, remarking that Navarro's late keepers were probably looking for him, and the latter soon continued:

"Of course, the business of silver mining in Mexico is in its infancy. The Indian troubles, the incessant anarchy of the country, the want of enterprise, and so forth, have all operated against extensive and successful mining. Another thing, the expense of getting steam-engines, and other materials from the coast is frightful. As you know, there is no access to the table plains from the gulf, for five hundred miles north of Potosi, the eastern Sierras are so steep, and hence the engines in the mines of Zacatecas have been dragged all the way from Vera Cruz. This necessarily doubles the cost of every engine. The French profess to bring an universal remedy for these evils, and all others; but I have not yet seen it. I never expect to see it."

"You are right, General Navarro," replied Hernan, sharing the prophetic enthusiasm of his companion.

Following a rude path leading into the wilderness of blended plain and forest north of Fresnillo, and a short distance off the Durango Road, the two men ascended one of the spurs of the Sierra Madre that characterized this region, and came to a scene of the wildest and most desolate description.

Before them, for the space of a mile in length, lay the slope of the mountain, denuded of its trees, with the exception of an occasionally clump, and dag full of tremendous pits. Around these pits lay immense piles of earth, and among them wound rugged paths, partially blocked up by huge timbers, fallen trees, and stones—the whole lying in death-like silence, and looking chaotic and Titanic!

"We are at our mine," said Navarro, as the two men passed into the midst of this desolation. "Around us are its shafts. It was discovered three hundred years ago by an ignorant fiddler, who, losing his way in the woods, while going home one night from a fandango, built a fire to cheer himself, and found a large lump of silver in the ashes in the morning, thus learning that he had made his fire on a vein that 'cropped out' on the surface. Three millions of dollars, besides all expenses, rewarded the lucky fiddler, who was made a marquis. After he deserted the mine, it seeming about exhausted, it was occupied and worked by others, who in turn deserted it, and in turn had their successors, as is customary. I visited this vicinity years ago, when quite a young man, and came to the conclusion that there is still a plenty of silver near us. We will see!"

While thus speaking, Navarro led the way to a side opening, in the middle section of the mine, and the couple dismounted, hitching their horses.

"What solitude! What decay!" exclaimed Hernan.

"Yes," answered Navarro. "We walk in the midst of ruin. Generations of miners have lived and died here. The Comanches and Apaches have hunted the miners hence repeatedly. Floods have burst into the pits. Entire shafts and galleries have been choked up. Wrecks of machinery and timber fill up the picture. Let's secure some pine knots for torches, and enter."

They procured the necessary light, and entered the side opening, scrambling along its damp and jagged sides, and advancing to a central gallery of the mine, where the desolation they had seen above was repeated, with the addition of a darkness like mid-

The gallery was immense, with a lofty ceiling, supported by pillars of earth and stone, which had been left by the mines for that purpose. It extended beyond the limits reached by the torchlight, and the voices of the two men, whenever they spoke, were prolonged far away in every direction, resounding hollowly and strangely on the still air.

The walls were everywhere slimy, and glistened with dripping water, stagnant pools of which had collected in various places.

The mine the two men had thus entered presented the usual features of those located in the Sierra Madre.

From the point where the fiddler had discovered it, the vein descended at a gentle inclination to the southeast, nearly a mile, until it was lost in the bowels of the earth.

The upper end of the vein had been worked from the surface, the middle section through side openings—by one of which the two men had entered—and the lower section by shafts, as is usual.

Smiling at the interest with which Hernan regarded the wild scene, Navarro led the way to a second gallery, which presented a scene of ruin and decay that was startling.

Before the explorers stood a large mining engine, with all its attendant machinery, covered with rust and mold. Shafts as large as one's arm had rusted in two, wheels had fallen on their sides, piles of rods and gearing had fallen into a chaotic mass, and the slimy sweat invisible from the mines had blended wood, iron, and steel into one common ruin.

"You see before you the relics of a characteristic folly," said Navarro. "During my college days this mine was taken possession of by a gentleman in moderate circumstances, whose judgment had been a little upset by the splendid successes of his predecessors. This unfortunate gentleman exhausted his means in putting in this machinery, draining, preparations, &c., and obtained little or no return for his outlay. At last, importuned by his creditors, and threatened by his needy workmen, he blew out his brains, somewhere near our present footing, and was buried here. Of course, since this tragedy, the mine has been more deserted than before."

Leading the way through several galleries which were nearly choked up with rubbish in places, Navarro finally passed under the lowest shaft of the mine and looked around. The dampness of the rocky walls around the explorers had increased at every step, and the solitude seemed to have grown more and more profound.

"Here we are," said Navarro. "How still! how desolate! Everything appears as it did twenty-five years ago. Yonder, at the end of the gallery, is the wall of rock that cuts off the vein."

He led the way to the wall of rock mentioned, surveyed it attentively a moment, and then resumed:

"Yes, everything is as I left it. Here is where the unfortunate gentleman I referred to ceased operations. My theory is that this wall of rock cuts off the vein, and at the same time, the strata being inclined, throws it upward. If this theory is true, we shall find silver on the other side of this wall. Now, as this unheeded strata crops out on the surface, and as its thickness is considerable, I am satisfied that a little digging on its south-east side will bring us to a rich mine."

He continued to explain his theory scientifically, until Hernan understood it and shared his hopeful opinion.

"Very good, then," said Navarro. "It only remains to verify our theory. We'll retrace our steps, plant ourselves at the point designated, and commence operations."

They returned to the surface, and entered upon their labours.

They worked untiringly all day, but saw no sign of silver, and consequently spent a gloomy and restless night, wrapped in their blankets.

The second day settled the problem of the silver-seekers decisively. After immense exertions they were compelled to acknowledge that Navarro's theory was wrong, and that the severed vein was inaccessible.

Towards night, weary and disappointed, the two men held a consultation with each other.

"It would cost twenty thousand dollars to decide whether there is silver here or not," was the declaration with which Navarro finished a long statement of his views.

"Then further operations are out of the question," responded Hernan. "We have not the means to proceed, and are too unsafe to think of protracted operations."

"We must separate," added Navarro. "I to find my lost family and cruel enemy; you to borrow money of your friends, resume command of your guerrillas, and find your father. I will disguise myself as a wandering friar, and prosecute my search."

"This seems our best course," declared Hernan, musing. "If the worst comes, I can resume mining

near the city of Mexico. At present we have not time for an elaborate pursuit of business."

They discussed their respective purposes at length, and Senor Navarro then set out for Durango, to look after a wealthy farmer mentioned by Hernan, who was presumed to be the old gentleman's former overseer and enemy; while our hero, mounting the good steed he had secured from General Donai, set out by secret paths for Mar's.

(To be continued.)

CUPID AND CHRISTMAS.

CUPID, none could tell the reason,
Ventured out one Christmas-day,
Christmas said, "You're out of season,
Silly urobin, go away;
You'll catch cold without your clothes,
See, the snow is on the ground;"
Bold he was, as you'll allow, sir,
There in winter to be found.
But the god—"twas very stupid—
Made his mind up then to stay,
"For I want to see," said Cupid,
"What you do when I'm away."

Christmas, like a good old fellow,
Cupid wrapped beneath his vest,
Took his seat, and then got mellow,
Where red lips the wine-cup press'd;
But, as Christmas sipped the nectar,
All at once he felt him go,
There sat Cupid, bold as Hector,
Swinging in the mistletoe:
All the pretty girls upstared,
Gather'd 'neath the pearly bough,
Then said Cupid, still light-hearted,
"Ha! my boys, I have you now."

Christmas scarce to speak was able,
Such a breach of faith as this!
All the young lads left the table,
Vowing they would have a kiss:
Then arose such shouts of laughter,
Christmas said, in accents kind,
With the holly over after
Mistletoe shall be combined.
This they tell us is the reason
Ever since it doth appear
Love is never out of season—
Cupid triumphs all the year.

J. E. C.

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.

WE will take Germany first. Now, in Germany, Christmas time is eminently a children's time. It is from this country we get what we commonly call a Christmas-tree. The children make little presents to their parents, and to each other, and the parents to the children. For three or four months, perhaps, before Christmas, the girls are all busy, and the boys save up their pocket-money to buy these presents. What the present is to be is cautiously kept secret; and the girls have a world of contrivances to conceal it—such as working when out on visits, and the others are not with them; getting up in the morning before daylight, and so on.

Then, on the evening before Christmas-day, one of the parlours is lighted up by the children—and into this parlour the parents must not go. A great yew or fir bough is fastened on the table, at a little distance from the wall. A multitude of little tapers are fixed in the bough, but not so as to burn it, until they are themselves nearly consumed—and coloured paper and other ornaments hang and flutter from the twigs. Under this bough the children lay out in great state the presents they mean for their parents, still concealing in their pockets what they intend for each other. Then the parents are introduced, and each presents his little gift. Then they bring out the remainder, one by one, from their pockets, and present them with kisses and embraces. The scene is usually a very pretty, as well as a very touching one. The bough or tree, with its appendages and ornaments and lights, make a pretty picture; and then, to crown the whole, there is the extravagant delight of the very little ones, when at last the twigs and leaves begin to take fire, and snap.

On the next day, Christmas-day, in the great parlour, the parents lay out on the table the presents for the children. A scene of more sober joy succeeds; as on this day, according to an old custom, the mother says privately to each of her daughters, and the father to his sons, that which has been observed as most praiseworthy, and that which has been observed as most faulty in their conduct during the year. Formerly also the Germans had an additional custom. These presents were sent to some man, whose busi-

ness it was to distribute them amongst the children. The man was dressed for the purpose, in large boots, a mask, and an enormous flax wig, and was called the "Servant Rupert." On Christmas-night he used to go round to every house, and say that he was sent there by the Saviour. The parents and the elder children received him with great pomp and reverence, while the little ones were most terribly frightened. He then inquired for the children, and according to the character which he heard from their parents, gave them the intended present, as if it were sent down from heaven to them. If, on the contrary, they had behaved badly during the year, he withheld the present, and counselled a judicious application of the rod. At the age of about seven or eight years the children were let into the secret, and it is curious how faithfully they kept it.

In some places in France an old domestic tradition is kept up. The children are taught to believe that if a shoe or any other receptacle be put in the chimney corner on Christmas-eve, a personage corresponding to Rupert the Servant, whom they call Papa Noel, will come in the night, if he is satisfied with the conduct of the children, and fill the shoe with toys. So in the morning there is a great scramble to get at the treasure.

On Christmas day, by-the-bye, a great deal of plumb-pudding is made and consumed in Paris, but by the English only. They say that no prejudice can be stronger than that of a Frenchman against plumb-pudding.

A Frenchman can be persuaded to dress like an Englishman, to drink like an Englishman, to act like an Englishman in many ways foreign to his own habits and partialities—but if you want to offend a Frenchman for ever, compel him to eat plumb-pudding.

Perhaps the reluctance to eat plumb-pudding has some connection with an event that happened many years ago at the French court.

One of the French monarchs, wishing to show honour to the English ambassador on Christmas-day, gave orders that his cooks should make a plum-pudding for his foreign guest. And inasmuch as the cooks had no idea whatever of the way in which the eatable in question was to be fabricated, for they had never seen a plum-pudding before, perhaps scarcely ever heard of one, he sent to England for a recipe for making it.

The recipe came—so many raisins, so much suet, so much flour, &c. Everything perfect. There could not possibly have been a better recipe given.

This was handed over to the cooks, with strict injunctions not to deviate from it by one hair's breadth; to observe it with the most perfect accuracy. They did so—the weight of the ingredients, their quality, the size of the copper in which it was to be boiled; the quantity of water, the duration of time—all was attended to. And the king spoke in dark, mysterious hints to the ambassador of some unknown gratification which was in store for him.

Well, at the appointed time in the dinner, up came the pudding. "There," said his majesty, "mon ami. There! I have prepared a treat for you. There is your national dish, prepared in your national fashion. Eat, and be merry." But the ambassador, instead of eating and being merry, only stared and rubbed his eyes. The plum-pudding was actually brought up in a tureen, and he was expected to eat it out of a soup plate, like soup, with a spoon. The fact was, that though the king had had the best possible recipe sent him, and had had his injunctions most strictly attended to by his cooks, he had forgotten one little matter—he had omitted to tell them that it was to be *boiled in a cloth*. So the cloth was omitted, and the plum-pudding was served up like soup, in an enormous tureen. Perhaps that is the cause of the dislike of the Frenchman to our national dish.

In Christiana and other Norwegian towns, your house-door, if you are a favourite, may be suddenly thrust open, and there may be pushed in the house a truss of hay or straw, or a bag of chaff. Examine it, and somewhere in the hay you will find a handsome present.

Lovers have been known to send to their betrothed an exceedingly large brown paper parcel. This, when opened, revealed a second parcel, with a loving motto, on the cover of it. And so on—there was parcel within parcel, motto within motto, until, at last, the patient searcher arrived at the kernel of this huge husk, which kernel proved to be an article of delicate and valuable jewellery.

And, again, one of the prettiest of Christmas customs is the practice, in Norway, of giving a Christmas dinner to the birds. On Christmas morning, every gable, gateway, or barn-door is decorated with a sheaf of corn, fixed upon the top of a tall pole, from which it is intended that the birds should make their Christmas dinner.

Even the peasant will contrive to have a handful sent by for this purpose; and what the birds do not eat on

Christmas-day remains for them to finish at their leisure through the winter.

Men's hearts are so full of love and goodwill to all that they wish even their fellow-creatures of the lower creation—to participate in their joy, and to feel that they, too, have a share in the blessings and bounties of the peace-making, love-bringing day.

CHRISTMAS-DAY AT JERUSALEM.

The *Monde* publishes, on the authority of two letters from its correspondent in the Holy Land, the following account of deplorable scenes of violence and disorder which occurred at Bethlehem on Christmas-day, caused, according to the writer, by the fanaticism of the Greek Christians against the Latins:

"According to the usual practice, the Latin Patriarch and his clergy assembled about noon on the 24th of December at the Patriarchal Seminary of Beit-Djala, and went thence in grand procession, accompanied by an immense crowd, to the Church of St. Mary ad Praspe, or rather of St. Helena, through which the Latins have only a disputed right of passage to the small Church of St. Catherine, where the vespers for Christmas-eve were solemnly chanted. Afterwards came the night service, celebrated pontifically by the Patriarch, assisted by his clergy. After the midnight mass, the Patriarch, bearing a cradle supposed to contain the infant Jesus, went in solemn procession to the Grotto of the Nativity, and deposited the cradle on the stone which marks the very spot where the Saviour was born. The "Gloria in Excelsis" and the "Te Deum" were next sung. Masses were then said at the altar of the Magi until the time appointed for the Greeks to enter the Grotto and chant their liturgy, after which the Latin masses were again resumed, and continued during the morning.

At half-past 11, while a Franciscan monk was engaged in celebrating mass, the Superior of the Greek convent entered the Grotto and complained of the Latins keeping possession of the altar so long. A Latin monk having refused to allow him to advance until the conclusion of the service, the Superior rushed into the Church of St. Helena, belonging to the Greeks, ordered the bells to be rung, and called on his co-religionists to drive out the Latins. He was heard to exclaim, "Kill four or five of those dogs; we will hold you blameless." A fierce conflict then ensued between the Latins and the Greeks in the choir of the Church of St. Helena, in spite of all the efforts of the Latin Patriarch to prevent such a scandalous scene. At last, however, the Mussulman Mulzelim of Bethlehem arrived with an armed force, and soon got the mastery of the Greeks, though they resisted violently at first. Two Latin monks were slightly wounded in the fray. Four of the Greek party were also wounded, and among them the Superior of the convent, who had been the cause of the conflict. In the evening twenty-five Bashli-Bazouks were sent to Bethlehem by the Pasha of Jerusalem, accompanied by three officials, empowered to hold an inquiry into the affair and bring the guilty parties to justice.

It is not necessary to describe the customs of our English Christmas. We remember the visit, when boys, to the good old grandmother; the bustle of preparation for many days before; the permitted peep into the mystery of the kitchen, the meat making for mince-pies, the calves'-foot jelly dropping from the long funny bags, like the cowls of monks; and then the puddings—black, round (the cloth not forgotten) which were bobbing up and down in the copper, many of them intended for the poor; the lordly joints of meat; the holly, the ivy, the evergreens; the old servants, who had not married over well, and who had almost forgotten the taste of a good dinner, invited to the old house, that they might once more warm their hearts, and expand in the glow of the Christmas festivities; and when the day came—the great day—the decorous going to church (those old-fashioned churches, with great square horse-boxes for pews, and green baize linings, like plate baskets, with pillars wreathed with evergreens, and Christmas texts running in letters of red holly berries round the church, and the preacher half lost in a bower or grove of leaves); and then coming home through the crisp, frosty air—for we used to have snow and ice then—and the assembling of the company—the old lady who had a mint of money, but was reputed never to allow herself a good dinner, except on Christmas-day, when she dined at other people's expense, and who eat certainly as if she was making up arrears; the other lady, who would not allow the policeman to walk home with her, because he would expect a sixpence for doing so, and she was not afraid of being robbed—not she; and the young ladies and middle-aged ladies, and the gentlemen—many now cold in their graves; and the joyful greetings, and the clatter of knives and forks; and the full persuasion of the good, kind old grandmother, that a boy was like a carpet-lag, and however much you stuffed into him there was always room for something more; and,

better than all the good fare and the cheerful conversation, the reconciliation of parted friends, the healing of breaches, the determination to forget and forgive—to live henceforth in the interchange of kind offices, and the strongly-knit tie of brotherly love—all these things, in some shape or other, we all remember, and the image is one not likely soon to be erased from our minds.

SCIENCE.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHITECTS' DRAWINGS.—Our attention has been called to some photographic copies of engineers' drawings by Mr. W. Willis, of Birmingham. By means of a photographic process, copies of drawings can be made rapidly and cheaply of the same size as the original. The original drawing is in no way injured by the process, and the copy is produced by simple superposition over the chemically-prepared paper, and is a positive copy direct, without the intervention of a negative.

APPARATUS FOR MEASURING THE SPEED OF A TRAIN.—The necessity of an apparatus for measuring the rapidity of trains, in order to ascertain whether they have kept within the bounds assigned to it by the regulations, has long engaged the attention of engineers. This problem, it is asserted, has been solved by MM. Borde and Meritens, by an apparatus consisting of a pulley placed in the centre of a large wheel, and receiving motion by means of an endless strap from one of the wheels of the locomotive or one of the carriages. The large wheel turns independently of the pulley; and, by means of a system of gearing, it effects a single revolution during the whole trip, while a second pulley, put into communication with the first one, turns with the same rapidity as the latter. Meanwhile, a centrifugal regulator impresses a forward or backward motion on a pencil, according as the rapidity increases or diminishes, and the marks left by this pencil on a piece of circular paper determine the rapidity of the train at a given moment.

KITES FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE IN SHIPWRECK.—Some time ago, Commander Nares, R.N. (then a lieutenant), invented a kite, for the express purpose of saving lives from a wreck, by means of sending a hawser on shore, at times and in circumstances that a lifeboat would be next to useless, as witness the recent disasters off the Tyne. To test his plan, he went overboard himself, and was dragged through the surf by the kite on shore, safe and sound. Those who witnessed the experiment were struck with its simplicity, and numerous naval officers, myself among the number, innocently imagined that every ship in the navy would be supplied with them, and that the Board of Trade would not allow a merchant ship to go to sea without one; but no steps have been taken in the matter. Vessels generally get wrecked on a lee shore, consequently the kite flown from the ship must, with the hawser, reach some part of the shore. What is the reason ships are not supplied with these kites? are they too cheap, or is the plan too simple?

SOME important experiment have been made with galvanised steel wire ropes at the Dock Testing Works, Birkenhead. The testing was at the instance of Messrs. Jones, Quiggin, and Co., the eminent iron shipbuilders, who are building a monster composite ship, the largest ever built in the Mersey. Being naturally anxious to have everything of the best and strongest for this vessel, they determined that the strength of all her materials should be thoroughly tested. For this purpose surplus pieces were cut from the wire rigging now in course of being manufactured for the vessel at Messrs. Garnock, Bibby, and Co.'s ropeworks. The testing showed the following extraordinary results:—4½ in. steel wire rope, 57 tons 1 cwt., the Admiralty test for charcoal wire of this size being 24 tons 8 cwt.; 3½ in. steel wire rope, 24 tons 6 cwt., Admiralty test for charcoal wire of this size 13 tons 10 cwt.; 2½ in. steel wire rope, 19 tons 6 cwt., Admiralty test for charcoal wire of this size 8 tons 11 cwt. The experiments were under the inspection of Mr. McDonald, the superintendent of the Birkenhead Testing Works.

On the day of election of President in New York, "all bar-rooms and drinking-places of whatever kind are closed, for it is a penal offence to sell or give away any intoxicating liquors, even ale or cider, on that day." This is a good hint for Great Britain.

IMMENSE BASINS OF SALT BETWEEN REESE RIVER AND OWEN'S RIVER.—The *Territorial Enterprise* says:—A gentleman who made a trip across the country, from Lone City, Reese River country, informs us that he crossed a great number of salt plains, from one to three miles in diameter, and one that was at least fifteen miles across, being an unbroken deposit of pure white salt. On these salt plains no sign of vegetation appears—neither is there to be seen the smallest

trace of animal life. There is not a hare, a bird, or even a lizard to be seen. All is solitude—a painfully silent mineral waste. On the trip our friend suffered severely from thirst. He was without water nearly two days, and thinks being deprived of water the worst torture that a human being can suffer.

Mr. W. SYKES, of Bishop Auckland, has just received a cheese, measuring 12 feet in circumference, 44 inches in diameter, and 18 inches in thickness, and weighing 1,082 lbs. It was manufactured in New York State.

FREE PUBLIC LABORATORY.—The French Government has decided on opening a free laboratory for practical chemistry, the direction being placed in the hands of M. Fremy, member of the Institute and professor. M. Ménier, a manufacturing chemist, who proposed to open a similar establishment, has given up the idea in favour of the Government plan, and has contributed the sum of 10,000 francs in aid.

PAGANINI'S VIOLIN.

PAGANINI'S violin got a fall in its case, which engendered an inner block. He went to M. Vuillaume a distress, saying his violin—a world-wide famous Guarnerius—had lost its tone. Vuillaume said the instrument must be opened; to which Paganini at last consented, on condition it should be done in his own presence. "It is impossible to describe the torture which Paganini endured. He twisted about, made grimaces, and suffered like a martyr; uttering exclamations which plainly showed the affection he entertained for his instrument, and the dreadful fears which he experienced at each crack caused by the breaking away of the glue, as it yielded to the action of the thin knife." Paganini then agreed to part with the instrument for three days. We suspect three hours would have done; but Vuillaume determined to make a fac-simile, which he took measures to do. Paganini, when he got the dear fiddle again, was delighted with it, said it was as good as before; and a few days afterwards, when Vuillaume paid it a visit as his request, said, "I have had two pins made, one for the doctor of my body, and the other for the doctor of my violin." The pin was a capital P, formed of twenty-three diamonds. Vuillaume, astonished at this generosity, offered Paganini the fac-simile he intended to make. When Paganini saw this instrument, the scene was strange and unaccountable. Paganini became serious and immovable. A look of doubt and fear overspread his features. Then he seemed surprised. He turned about the violins, changed their places; and more than once took the imitation for the original. He was evidently but little pleased to see a violin so similar to his own. At length he seized his bow to try the new violin, and, on sitting down, exclaimed: "It is very good; it is like mine; it has the same tone—the same quality; it is my violin, leave it with me." Paganini then ordered another, at £20, which reached Nice just as he expired. The first fac-simile is the instrument on which Sivioli plays.—*Abridged from "Notice of Anthony Stradivari, the celebrated Violin-maker," by F. T. Fetis.*

INGENIOUS IDEA.—The fact that the study of nature tends directly to the civilisation of a nation was well understood, more than a century and a half ago, by that ingenious, self-made Peter the Great, of Russia. He conceived the idea that a love for this department of science would contribute much to the civilisation and refinement of his barbarous subjects, and accordingly he established, at an enormous expense, a large museum of natural history at St. Petersburg; and, in order to induce his whiskey-loving subjects to go there, he ordered a glass of brandy to be presented to every visitor.

THE ADVANTAGE OF PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE.—A ludicrous story is told of Lord Camden being on a visit to Lord Daer in Essex, and accompanying a gentleman notorious for his absence of mind, in a walk, during which they came to the parish stocks. Having a wish to know the nature of the punishment, the chief justice begged his companion to open them so that he might try. This being done, his friend sauntered on, and totally forgot him. The imprisoned chief tried in vain to release himself, and on asking a peasant who was passing by to let him out, was laughed at and told he "wasn't set there for nothing." He was soon set at liberty by the servants of his host; and afterwards, on the trial of an action for false imprisonment against a magistrate by some fellow whom he had set in the stocks, on the council for the defendant ridiculing the charge and declaring it was no punishment at all, his lordship leaned over and whispered, "Brother, were you ever in the stocks?" The counsel indignantly replied, "Never, my lord." "Then I have been," said the chief justice, "and I can assure you it is not the trifle you represent it.—*The Judges of England, with Sketches of their Lives, and Miscellaneous Notices connected with the Courts of Walsingham.*



[THE OLD WOMAN'S PROPHECY.]

THE KEEPER OF THE FERRY.

By the Author of "The Bondage of Brandon."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ROBBERY.

And when the blustering winter winds
Howl in the woods that clothe my cave,
I lay me on my lonely mat,
And pleasant are my dreams.

Kirke White.

When wintry winds
Rush from their frozen caves, and Eurus rides
On the dark clouds.

Drummond.

The charcoal-burners seemed to think that the intrusion upon their solitude meant them some harm. In reality, they were afraid that Gosh was in some way connected with the local constabulary, which would have been ruinous to them, as they had stolen the sheep, a part of which was at that very time frizzling upon the embers of their fire. Sheep stealing was an illegal amusement they frequently indulged in; and although the farmers, whose folds and homesteads were circumjacent, had their suspicions, they had never as yet been able to prove anything against the charcoal-burners, who had many opportunities of laying hold of a stray sheep and dragging it into the wood, when they could without difficulty effectually conceal it until they had finally disposed of it.

By this means their food cost them little. Strange, wild-looking men were those charcoal-burners. Their state appeared at first sight to bear a resemblance to the primitive or savage condition of men before the light of civilization dawned upon the human race, and raised men in the social scale. Their long and shaggy hair; their twisted, matted, tangled, beards; their dusky skins, tanned by exposure to the sun, browned by the attacks of inclement weather, and naturally of an olive tint, owing to their Israelitish blood; their dark, piercing eyes, and their prominent noses; their ragged clothes; their strong frames,—all combined to strike the beholder with wonder, if not with awe.

It was the witching hour of night. The scene and the hour were calculated to make a strong impression upon a man whose nerves were less strongly strung than those of the ruffian who had burst unceremoniously upon the privacy of the charcoal-burners; but Gosh was an individual who feared nothing, and when both men snatched up burning brands with which to attack him, he followed their example, and armed himself with a log as big as a brickbat, all flaming, flaring, and smoking. With

this upraised in his right hand, he stood upon the defensive.

Seeing that he was determined to resist, the charcoal-burners thought it would only be prudent to hold a parley with so determined a foe. Accordingly, Shadrach exclaimed in a gruff voice, which he had acquired by continued exposure to the weather:

"Who are you? and what do you want here?"

"I am a traveller," replied Gosh, "and I have lost my way in the wood. I don't mean you any harm. I have a friend lying at the foot of one of the trees yonder, who has hurt his leg; and if you or your friend will show us the way out of the wood, or give us shelter for the night, we will give you something for your trouble."

"He speaks fairly enough," said Shadrach to Bendigo. "Shall we trust him, and do as he requests?"

"Ask him if he belongs to these parts," replied Bendigo.

"Where do you hail from?" inquired Shadrach.

"Miles away from here."

The charcoal-burners once more conferred together, and the result of their deliberations appeared in Shadrach's reply:

"Go and bring your wounded friend. We will give you a share of our fire and some supper."

Gosh was overjoyed at the successful issue of what at first threatened to be a sanguinary adventure. He could have fought one man for any length of time, but he did not feel himself equal to the task of encountering two men; for the end of such a combat could not be long doubtful—he would in the nature of things have been conquered in the course of time. Joe was too much injured and too exhausted to be of the slightest use to him.

In five minutes he had retraced his steps, and was standing over Spanish Joe, who was groaning heavily, as if in great pain.

"Cheer up, old man," exclaimed his companion, "we're in luck to-night."

"I'm blessed if I think so. What am I to do with my leg?" responded Joe, with a growl.

"I'll see to that presently. First of all, let's go and have a warm, and a bit of something to eat."

"Don't be a fool and talk nonsense; I'm r—" in the humour for it," said Joe. "Where are we to have a fire, or anything to cook?"

"Not far off."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Of course I am," answered Gosh. "I happened fortunately to come across a couple of men burning charcoal. They have half a sheep in their hut, and there is a most appetizing smell of mutton chops.

Do you think you can get up and limp along with my assistance, or shall I carry you?"

"Let me lean on your elbow, and I am sure I can walk a short distance."

Gosh put out his hand with great solicitude, for he was as tender as a woman to his wounded comrade.

Nothing is more singular than the admixture of bad and good in ruffians of the lowest class. Those who behold them at a distance would not believe that they have one quality to save them from eternal perdition; and yet those who know them intimately and have studied their characters closely and critically, know that they are occasionally devoted in their friendships, and generous to a fault.

The man who would commit a murder without compunction, and shed blood like water without a sigh or a shudder, would share his last crust with a friend, and fight like a madman in his defence.

The ruffian hobbled along like a *diable boiteux*, and continued to groan at intervals. The distance was short, and he was glad when he succeeded in traversing it.

"Hollo! mate," exclaimed Shadrach, when he saw his guests approaching. "You've got a lame leg. Is it broke?"

"No. It isn't so bad as that; but some fellow who was out shooting put a charge of shot in it. Bless him. I should like to come across him, that's all. Perhaps I shall some day. Anyhow, I'll live in hopes; and if we do meet, it'll be the worse for him, that's all I've got to say; for I'll take my oath both of us don't survive that meeting!"

There was a savage energy about the man as he delivered himself of this speech, which would have struck a chill to Mr. Montague Capel's heart had he heard it, but happily that gentleman was more pleasantly occupied than in listening to the threats of a blood-thirsty bravo.

"I suppose you were doing a little poaching," said Shadrach, with a half smile. "There's plenty of that sort of game going on about here; and the keepers will always pepper you with swan shot, by mistake of course, if they get near enough. I was touched up myself about three months ago, and all because I took a fancy to a pheasant; I thought he'd broil well for supper."

Spanish Joe seemed willing that the charcoal-burners should believe the hypothesis they had suggested, for he made no answer.

The night was becoming very cold, the wind had suddenly veered round to the north-east, and a biting, keen, and wintry blast swept through the branches of

the trees, making the men shiver as they sat round the fire. Bendigo good-naturedly placed a bundle of leaves and dry grass at Joe's service, saying:

"You'll be easier on that than on the bare earth, and I'm sure you're welcome to it if so be as you'll have it."

Joe looked up at him thankfully, and replied:

"I'm your debtor, and will do as much for you some day, if I have the chance."

"What will you have for your supper? we've a bit of mutton if you like to cut off some slices and broil it over the fire," said Shadrach.

Gosh accepted this offer of something to eat; for he was hungry. What remained of the stolen sheep was brought out of the hut, and Gosh helped himself, cutting off as much as he thought his friend and himself would be able to consume.

He threw the slices of juicy meat upon the glowing embers, and one of the charcoal-burners lent him a sharp-pointed stick, with which to turn the meat over when he thought that one side was done enough. Plates, and knives, and forks there were none. The charcoal-burners eat their meat with their fingers, tearing it with their teeth, after the manner of wild beasts; but Joe had a knife in his pocket, and with that the ruffians carved their victuals in a less cannibal-like manner.

When this rough meal was over, the charcoal-burners produced a stone bottle, containing whiskey, which they offered to their new acquaintances, never doubting that they would be rewarded for their kindness in the morning.

Spanish Joe did not drink much, for he was afraid of inflaming his wound; but Gosh indulged freely, and became boisterously merry.

Songs were sung, and the scene resembled a feast of Bacchanals.

The charcoal-burners gave up their hut to Joe, and he was carried to a heap of dried fern, upon which he contrived to go to sleep, and snatch a few hours of repose.

The others fell into a drunken slumber around the fire much later in the night, and awoke the next morning with aching heads and burning throats.

On examination, Spanish Joe's wounds were found to be much inflamed, and he expressed his determination to stay a day or two where he was, if the charcoal-burners would let him. They made no objection, and Shadrach obtained some water from a spring which welled up hard by; and placing it by the wounded man's side in a pannikin, Joe took off his neckerchief, and bathed his wounds whenever they felt hot and feverish. Towards the evening, suppuration commenced, and he did not suffer so much as he had done hitherto.

Gosh grew impatient of living in the forest, and panted for action and the delights of the Crow's Nest once more.

But they were delights which were not forthcoming. He could not desert his friend, and there seemed every probability of his being compelled to stay in the forest for some days, perhaps weeks, to come. In this emergency, it occurred to him that he might "try his hand" in the country, in which, for a brief space, his lot had been cast, and with that idea in his mind, he asked Shadrach if there were any houses in the neighbourhood.

Of course, he did not reveal his designs to the charcoal-burners. He merely spoke to them in a casual way, as if he was desirous of obtaining general information, and hearing any gossip that might be afloat respecting the inhabitants.

"Is this a large wood?" he asked.

"Goes inland a long way," replied Shadrach, "but it does not extend much either way along the coast."

"Are there any country gentlemen living about here?"

"Not many, that I know of. There's Sir Thomas or Sir William Wicherley living up at Baskerdale, that's to the left; then there is Miss Wicherley, who lives at Petrel House, near Fenny Drayton, that's to the right; and lower down, to the left again, there is the keeper of the ferry."

"Is he well off?"

"Nothing to speak about. If you want to pay your expenses back to town, you might get a pound or two," replied Shadrach, with a knowing look.

"You are fond of your jokes, I can see; but no matter. My friend will be obliged to stay here for some time, I expect; and as he seems to have made it all right with you, I must do the same; but I shall take a walk about, when it gets dark, and see if I can't do a little poaching."

Both Shadrach and Bendigo looked suspiciously at one another, as if they did not altogether credit the statement they had just heard; but they soon afterwards went on with their work, and the remarks made by Gosh faded from their memory.

On leaving the charcoal-burners, Gosh paid a visit to Spanish Joe, who was still too ill to move, and sit-

ting down on a three-legged stool by his side, exclaimed:

"How do you find yourself to-day?"

"No better," replied Joe, with a shake of the head.

"You'll have to stop here some time yet, I suppose? and I've been thinking how I can best amuse myself, and astonish the natives at the same time. I've asked our charcoal friends who live in this neighbourhood, and I've a good mind to call upon one or two of them; only, as my visit will be in the night time, I shall not be under the necessity of leaving my card, which is fortunate, considering that I have left my case up in town."

The wounded ruffian smiled faintly at his friend's wit, and replied:

"Mind you don't get into any trouble. I don't like the idea of you going on any expedition without me; and if you was nobbled by the police, what should I do? I should be lost without you. It's had enough now, lying on my back here. If it wasn't for a bit of shag tobacco now and then, and a drop of Irish whiskey, I should take leave of my senses. Yesterday was Sunday, and I did miss my Sunday paper above a bit. It's the Middlesex Sessions, and I know no more than a baby how the Bencul got on over that bit of housebreaking. Then there was Slashing Tommy, and Big Ben, and Mike the Magsman, and Tony the Topplin, and Pat O'Rafferty, who were all laid by the heels last month. I'd give a Jew's eye for a Sunday's paper; but I suppose I may wish, as no one is likely to get me one down here."

"If I come across one to-night, you may promise yourself I'll lay tight hold of it, Joe," said Gosh, feelingly. "I mean to have a little sport to-night, and it's lucky I brought my tools with me. The police down here will starve a bit when they see my handiwork. There'll be no Brummagem about it. It'll be all good, honest, plain, straight-forward work, that no one in these parts can match."

"That it will. I'm sorry I'm no good to you, my boy; but my wishes go with you, and I'll drink to you when you're at work."

As soon as the shades of night had fallen, Gosh took himself off for the purpose of reconnoitring, and walked along the sea shore until he arrived at the ferryman's cottage.

Stephen Goodall was mending an old drag-net, with whose help he occasionally caught a few fish, not for sale, but for his own eating, and to give to his friends. It was growing so dark that he could scarcely see the meshes, and he was about to leave off, when the foot-steps of a stranger arrested his attention.

"Want to go over, sir?" he said, addressing the approaching figure, which was dimly visible in the increasing darkness.

"Not to-night, thank you, master," was the reply.

"It's rather dark for net patching, isn't it?"

"It be getting darkish, certainly," replied the keeper of the ferry; "but we have to work at odd jobs like this when we can. It won't do for poor folks to be particular. I'm generally on the look out now, for on this coast one must sleep with both eyes open. The other day some rascals—I wish I had 'em near me—ran away with my boat, and drowned my 'prentice."

"Did they really? That was carrying a joke too far," said Gosh, in a tone of commiseration, though he was laughing in his sleeve all the time. "Why don't you put the police on the scent?"

"The police about here are no good," replied Stephen Goodall, contemptuously. "I found my boat again; but I'm main sorry for the child. He was a promising lad, and had never done them any harm. But that's the way in this world, the best are sure to go, worse luck."

"According to that, you must be an uncommon bad 'un," exclaimed Gosh, "seeing that you are an old sinner."

"Now I don't want none of your fun poked at me," retorted the keeper of the ferry, angrily. "If you ain't going over, perhaps you will go on, and leave me alone with my work. I don't choose to be hindered by every noodle that comes by."

"The beach is not yours, no more is the path; and I suppose I've as much right on it as you have."

"I'll show you how much right you have on it if I take you in hand, my pipkin," cried the keeper of the ferry, angrily.

"Well, don't put your bristles up for nothing," said Gosh, in a mollifying manner. "I only wish to know the way to Baskerdale, where Sir William Wicherley lives."

"I don't mind telling you that, for I shall stand a chance of getting rid of ye," replied the keeper of the ferry, who gave the scoundrel the necessary directions.

As Gosh passed by the side of the cottage, he saw some linen and other articles of wearing apparel lying upon the hedge, where they no doubt had been put to dry. A sudden thought struck him, and he snatched

up a coat of the ferryman's, and, slinging it over his arm, made off with it. After he had gone some distance, he took off his own coat and waistcoat, and slipped on the ferryman's jacket. It was a little too large for him, but that did not much matter; he took it off once more and tore it in several places, making it look like the garment of a tramp. He then threw it beneath his feet, and trudged upon it to make it dirty and disreputable. Having done this to his satisfaction, he once more put it on, and hid his own clothes in a bush by the side of the path, marking the spot with a large stone, so that he should know it again.

He then pushed on to Baskerdale.

The clock in the courtyard was striking the hour of seven when he reached the residence of Sir Thomas Wicherley. He made his way to the back door, carefully noting every avenue and every approach, and looking out for dog-kennels, especially scrutinizing the kitchen windows, and wondering why they were not barred. There was no one at the back door; so he rang the bell.

A servant answered the summons, and asked him what he wanted.

It was the scullery-maid; and although her position for the time being was humble, she was good-hearted, and could feel keenly for genuine distress. Most servants will entertain a book-hawker, when they will drive away a tramp; but she never lost an opportunity of bundling a handful of broken victuals into a poor fellow's hand.

"What do you want?" she exclaimed, holding the door in her hand.

"A morsel of food, if you please, miss; I'm very hungry, and haven't had bite or sup since last night, when a gentleman gave me a penny to buy a loaf. I'll be very thankful for any scrap you have to spare, and God will bless you for your kindness, dear lady."

The scullery-maid was flattered at the idea of being called a lady; and she was about to go away and bring some bread and cheese and the remains of a chicken from the larder, which the cat would have had the credit of appropriating, when Mr. Lister, who had been to the cellar to get the wine for his master's dinner, passed by, and exclaimed:

"Who's that, Liza?—and what does he want?"

"It's only a poor beggarman, Mr. Lister; and he doesn't mean any harm. He only asks for a crust of dry bread and a warm at the fire. He's thirsty, and the wind whistles through him."

"It may whistle, for me," replied Mr. Lister. "He'll get no warm at the fire here, so I can tell him. He's come to the wrong shop; and if he isn't packing in double-quick time, I'll set the dogs at him."

"Don't be hard upon me, sir!" said Gosh, in a whining voice; "I'm very hungry, and I wouldn't ask for anything if I knew where to get a night's lodging or a bit of bread."

"Why don't you work? You are a strong, healthy fellow; or, if you can't work, go to your parish. I've no patience with you tramping fellows. I work for my living, and I don't see why you shouldn't. Now, then, be off with you, or I'll set the dogs on you."

Gosh slunk away at this threat; but seeing that the scullery-maid beckoned to him, he stood still behind the shelter of the corner, and in a few minutes' time she came to him with some bread and meat and a few halfpence of her own money.

"Thank you kindly, lady," said Gosh, accepting the donation with apparent gratitude. "Heaven will bless you. I hope that gentleman who drove me away will not say anything to you?"

"Oh, no—he is not my master. He is the butler. I don't care for him and the groom. It's only Mr. Hindon and Sir Thomas that can send away a servant," replied the girl.

Having skillfully elicited the information that there was only four men on the premises, Gosh went away with his bread and his meat, which was very good of its kind, and which he did not disdain to eat as he jogged along.

He had, during his brief stoppage at the hall, noticed the way in which the building was put together; and had, with an artistic eye, pitched upon the identical window at which he intended, later at night, to effect an entry into the mansion.

So it will be seen that he had not wasted his time.

When he came to the spot where he had hidden his clothes, he took off the ferryman's ragged jacket, and threw it away, once more donning his own things.

Then he chose a secluded spot; and sitting down, with his back against a tree, he smoked his pipe, and thought over his future plans.

He remained there some time, and fell asleep.

When he awoke, the moon was up; and although its surface was occasionally obscured by a cloud, it gave a good light, which was not favourable to the ruffian's enterprise.

CHAPTER XVI

IN LOVE.

While as his flying fingers kiss'd the strings,
Love framed with mirth a gay fantastic round;
Loose were her tresses seen, her zone unbound,
And he admired his frolic play.
As if he would the charming air repay,
Shook thousand odours from his dewy wings.

Collins.

SIR THOMAS WICHERLEY was so much gratified with Miss Rose Wicherley's invitation to visit her at her house that he did not fail to do so. He expected to find her living in great pomp, though she chose to be celebrated for her rigid seclusion. He could not believe that she cared very little for the vanities of the world; all he knew was that he liked them himself, and he thought that other people must like them also. Sir Thomas was a shallow reasoner; but was he not shallow in all that he did?

Hindon was affected in a very different manner from Sir Thomas. He fell in love with Miss Wicherley. There was something so angelic and so ethereal about the lady, that he could not check his enthusiasm; and with the hardness peculiar to him, he determined to see if he could not marry Miss Wicherley.

There was something in the idea which was peculiarly pleasing to him.

He knew that to contemplate a union with his master's aunt was presumptuous; but it was one of his favourite aphorisms, that in order to achieve, we must first dare.

Many men in a lowly position had, to his certain knowledge, married ladies of high rank. Butlers had married their mistresses; clerks had espoused their employers' widows; footmen had run away with their masters' daughters, and so on. Why, then, should he despair of making an impression upon the heart of Miss Rose Wicherley? He was a steward, and the confidential servant of Sir Thomas. His was not exactly a menial position. So, to employ an orientalism, he put on the armour of boldness, and brandished the sword of audacity, while he went to rest upon the rose leaves of hope.

Hindon, although an undoubtedly clever fellow, was, without knowing it, treading in the footsteps of Malvolio.

"I'll tell you what, Hindon," said Sir Thomas, "I rather like my aunt. She is very good, no doubt about that. My uncle was a quiet, nanby-pamby sort of fellow, who encouraged her in all her milk-and-water ways. My opinion is, she wants bringing out. I'll undertake to make her imbine an interest in worldly affairs. I think I'll call upon her, and ask her if she will ride to hounds, if I make her a present of a horse; eh! Hindon? will she accept the offer?"

"I should imagine not," replied Hindon, shaking his head. "If you want to make friends with the lady, I should advise you to subscribe to some religious society in the success of which she is interested. For instance, does she propagate the gospel in foreign parts, or circulate religious tracts?"

"Most likely. I'll do both, Hindon, I strongly approve of both. Country gentlemen always support the Church of England. It's the proper thing to do. I'll put my name down for ten guineas, and there's the county hospital and the home missions. I'll be in all of them; don't you forget that."

"I'll remember, sir," replied Hindon, "will you go to Petrel House to-day; we have nothing else to do? No one is expected to call, and we can drive over, if you like to order the carriage."

"So be it," said the baronet; "you shall drive me over."

Hindon obeyed his command with pleasure, for he longed to be in the society of the lady with whom he had fallen in love. He did not stay to reflect about his passion; he did not ask himself whether he was doing right or wrong in indulging it. All he knew, or cared to know, was that he had some money of his own, and was in a fair way to obtain some more from his master.

In his opinion, the possession of wealth constituted a man and gentleman; and he wished to marry a lady, so that there could be no doubt about his gentility.

He was rather romantic in his ideas, and he wished that Miss Wicherley had some terrible secret of which he could possess himself, so that he might have a hold over her which he could use to his own advantage. But Sir William Wicherley's sister was one of the most candid and open-hearted of human beings, and it seemed impossible that there should be anything mysterious about her. Petrel House could not be a Castle of Udolpho, yet that was precisely what his fancy would have made it.

When Sir Thomas and his faithful friend arrived at Fenny Drayton they were directed to Petrel House. The door was opened to them by a footman dressed in black, and wearing a simple shoulder knot of twisted cord. He informed the visitors that his mistress was in the school-room, and that he would announce them. In the meantime they were ushered into a plainly

furnished room, in which were numberless books of a religious character, and a few pictures; these were heirlooms, and of great value. They looked black and dingy with the smoke and dust of years, and those who were not *connoisseurs* would have passed them by with a casual if not a contemptuous glance.

When the man returned, he informed Sir Thomas, who was rapturously regarding the delicate pencilling of Titian, that Miss Wicherley begged to be excused for not coming up-stairs, as she was engaged with her school. She would take it as a favour if Sir Thomas would go to the school room.

The baronet made no objection to this proposal; he was perfectly willing to go to the schoolroom, and he did so.

It was a substantially-built room, capable of holding three or four hundred people. It was situated in a small paddock by the side of the house, and in it were congregated about fifty children, who were in the habit of coming twice a week to be instructed by their kind preceptor.

As Sir Thomas and Hindon entered, the children were singing a hymn called "The Promised Land," in which task they acquitted themselves favourably. They afterwards sang other pieces for the edification of the baronet, who was pleased to express his satisfaction through Hindon, whom he directed to give them a sovereign, to be equally divided amongst them; and the little innocents, as Miss Wicherley called them—although it may be remarked, in passing, that some of them were far from being deserving of the epithet—gave three cheers for Sir Thomas Wicherley.

Miss Wicherley greeted her dutiful nephew affectionately; showed him all over her garden; talked to him about her schools and her charitable enterprises; and promised to come to dinner with him on a future day. She appeared to be in high spirits, and Hindon thought she looked charming. When Sir Thomas expressed his intention of subscribing to her favourite charities, she thanked him with an eloquent glance, and said:

"I am glad to see that you are of opinion that your new position has other claims upon you than that of being a patron of the hunt and a steward of the coursing club. 'Throw your bread upon the waters, and it shall come back to you after many days.'"

Sir Thomas made some appropriate reply, and soon afterwards took his leave.

The remarks he made to Hindon were characteristic of the man.

"She is not a bad sort in her way, Hindon," he said; "but she is too nanby-pamby for me. I don't think I shall ever make anything of her. I wish to goodness I could. I mean myself to take up politics, and get into Parliament. I can't live long out of London. Walking up and down St. James Street and Pall Mall is second nature to me, and I must do it or die. Now, if my aunt would marry Lord Colebrooke-dale, or some other big gun in the county, we might have the political interest in our hands. It's a pity, Hindon, a great pity; for she has something in her—some talent, sir; if she would only give it scope and let it come out."

Sir Thomas Breckenridge Wicherley had been very fortunate in making a good impression upon those with whom he had come in contact. All the local magnates had called upon him and expressed their pleasure at seeing him amongst them; and he felt confident of achieving popularity in the county, and enjoying the old estate for many years.

He was reported to be a good churchman and a moderate politician.

The child whom Hindon and himself had discovered at the ferry-house, had hitherto been a thorn in his side; but he believed that the irritant would soon be removed, and that he would be undisturbed in the possession of Baskerdale.

CHAPTER XVII

MR. CAPEL'S NEPHEWS.

Pleased with your growing virtue I received you,
Courtied and sought to raise you to your merits;
My house, my table, nay, my fortune, too,
My very self was yours; you might have used me
To your best service. Like an open friend,
I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine. Otway.

MR. MONTAGUE CAPEL had two nephews, who were but little older than Arthur. Mr. Capel had informed the boy of the fact before he took him home, and declared that he would place him upon an equality with them. They were far from resembling their uncle. There was little that was good or generous about them, which was the more surprising, as their mother and father had died poor, and they had been brought up in great poverty. They were entirely indebted to Mr. Capel for what little they knew, and for the education they were receiving. Nevertheless, they were proud and haughty, and conceived a violent hatred and detestation for Arthur from the first hour they saw him.

He was not daunted, however; for he knew that the mounted police were few and far between, and that the keeper of the ferry was an old man, with no grown-up sons to assist him.

As far as he could judge, it was close upon eleven o'clock; he must have slept for two hours or two hours and a half.

He was cold and chilly, and he walked along the roadway leading to the ferry with great speed, in order to make his blood circulate and flow through his veins with its accustomed vigour.

There was no light to be seen in the keeper of the ferry's dwelling; all was quiet as the grave. The good man had evidently gone to bed, hoping to snatch a few hours' repose, which was sometimes a vain endeavour.

Gosh thought that he could gain nothing by going back to the charcoal-burners' camp. He had intended to do so before he fell asleep; but as the night appeared to be so far advanced, it was useless to think of it.

Stephen Goodall had no fear of thieves. He had never been robbed, and it was no unusual thing for his wife to go to rest and leave the garden-door on the latch, or to omit to make good the fastenings of the window-shutters.

She had, as it happened, done neither the one nor the other; and when Gosh laid his burglarious hands upon the front parlour window, it shot up easily, and the next moment he had vaulted lightly into the room.

The moonlight streamed into the apartment, rendering everything in it distinctly visible.

Two cupboards arrested the housebreaker's attention; and he drew a small chisel from his pocket, with the aid of which he, in an incredibly short space, opened the one nearest him.

There were a few shells and some seaweed in it; some jars of pickles and some pots of jam. Behind one of the latter he discovered a small casket, of wrought ivory.

It was the one which Sir William Wicherley had, before his lamentable death, given to Stephen Goodall, and which would, if opened, in all likelihood, have been of great service to the orphan, both in establishing his identity, and in other ways.

Gosh at once secured it, and was about to ransack the other cupboard, when a heavy footfall was heard on the stairs, and it was clear, to the meanest comprehension, that somebody was approaching.

Not caring to risk a hand-to-hand encounter with the ferryman, Gosh jumped at once out of the window, and took to his heels; but he was closely followed by Stephen Goodall, who was furious at the idea of being robbed.

He expected some passengers about three o'clock in the morning, and had thrown himself upon his bed with his clothes on, so as to be ready for the emergency.

He dashed after the burglar with a rapidity equal to his own, and an exciting chase ensued.

Gosh was not well acquainted with the locality; he had only a general idea of it, and instead of going in the direction of the forest, he went towards Baskerdale, and entered the confines of the Wicherley property. Stephen Goodall was not far behind him. A clump of trees stood before the fugitive, and he darted in amongst them, hoping to find shelter. One tree was of immense girth and hollow; into the cavity Gosh crept and hid himself. This decisive movement threw Goodall off the scent, and he returned home disconsolate and unsuccessful, thinking the villain who had robbed him, or attempted to rob him, had escaped.

For more than half-an-hour Gosh remained in his unpleasant and confined position. At the expiration of that time he emerged from his hiding-place, and looked around him.

No one was to be seen.

"I am well out of that, at all events," he muttered. "I wonder what that ivory casket contains? I hate carrying mysterious things about with me, so I will open it."

He took out his chisel, and armed himself with a stone instead of a hammer for that purpose. Then he felt in his pocket for the casket; but what was his consternation to be unable to find it? He felt first in one pocket and then in another, but without success.

He concluded that he must have dropped it while running.

It was a loss, but one he did not much care about, although it is always annoying to lose anything, however trivial it may be. He looked into the hollow tree, but could not see it there. Rabbits had burrowed in the tree, and there were some holes still existing there. It might have fallen down one of them, but Gosh did not give himself the trouble to carry the investigation any further; he buttoned up his coat, and walked off in the direction of Baskerdale, hoping that although he had been foiled in one quarter, he might be more successful in another.

They had sense enough to recognize in him a serious rival in their uncle's affections. One was ten years old, the other twelve, and they were named respectively Ernest and Sinclair.

Sinclair the eldest was overbearing in his manner, and generally disliked by the servants, and those who to a certain extent owned his authority. Ernest followed his brother's example. Mr. Capel had provided a tutor for the boys, who was a very worthy man, and one to whom their education might be safely entrusted. He was a grey-headed old gentleman, whose age nearly approached sixty. Unquestionably clever, he had commenced life by achieving the most brilliant successes at the university to which his parents had sent him, but these successes were not repeated in his after career. It was like the magnificent flash of a rocket or a Roman candle, which dazzles for a brief space, and then fades away for ever. The pyrotechnic display is glorious while it lasts; but it is the harbinger of ensuing darkness. Ill luck had dogged Mr. Pope's footsteps with unremitting industry; and instead of being at the top of the tree in his old age, for which giddy height he was pre-eminently qualified, he was sitting at the roots, and looking at his more fortunate rivals in a disconsolate manner.

Teaching children the rudiments of those arts and sciences which you have yourself mastered in all their wide ramifications is an arduous and an irksome task, and so Mr. Pope found it, but he was glad to do anything that was not beneath his dignity, so that he might gain a living, and maintain himself in his declining years. The tutor took a great fancy to Arthur, who was more docile and obedient than his other pupils, who were never happy unless they were romping boisterously in the fields, or riding on their ponies over hedge and ditch, at the imminent risk of their necks.

Arthur had a small sitting-room, and a bed-room given him, as his own particular suite of apartments, and a present of books was made him. His great delight was to arrange everything in his rooms methodically, and spend all his money in augmenting his household gods and treasures. Nor was the sum of money at his command for so young a boy contemptible. Mr. Capel gave each of the youths a sovereign a month, which they were at liberty to spend in any way they liked best.

Sinclair and his brother gave Arthur the nickname of the Australian, and nothing pleased them so much as to ask him who his father was. Arthur bore their taunts with equanimity, although he could not help wishing that he was a little bigger, so that he might fight them for such unkind attacks.

The house in which Mr. Capel resided was a small compact dwelling, surrounded on all sides with a wide expanse of table land, which was occasionally intersected by dykes and gullies, and to ride in the neighbourhood was considered dangerous, unless the equestrian was acquainted with the character of the ground.

The brothers knew this, and they determined to put Arthur on horseback and let him take his chance. Perhaps they were animated more by a love of mischief than anything else. It would be difficult to believe these boys of so tender an age could deliberately plan the death of, or contemplate serious injury to their playmate and constant associate.

Arthur had no pony of his own, though Mr. Montague Capel had ordered one for him. The boy had a very good idea of riding, for in Australia he had been accustomed to back one of the rough, wild, shaggy ponies of that continent; and when Sinclair proposed to him that he should try his pony, he acceded to the proposal without making any objection, for although he was fond of learning, he was equally fond of outdoor amusements and recreation, which he had always been taught to look upon and consider conducive to health and muscular development. When Mr. Pope heard where the boys were going, he said to Arthur: "Better to stay at home with me and work out that problem. It is a dangerous country, and I should be sorry for anything to happen to you."

But, as Arthur had been working all the morning, he disregarded this warning, and followed the brothers to the stables.

In the yard they saw an aged woman, who leant upon a stick. She was in earnest conversation with a groom, whose special province it was to attend to the wants of the young gentlemen.

"Now, Jim," exclaimed Sinclair, "mind your business. I want my pony, and I can't have you wasting your time with a parcel of old women."

The groom walked away, grumbling audibly, while the old woman said, in a soft voice:

"Shall I tell your fortune, kind sir? I can tell you how the stars met at your birth, and whether you was born under a lucky constellation."

"I've no money to spare. If you will tell me for nothing, you may," replied the boy.

"That is hardly fair upon an old woman," said the crone. "You are too hard upon me."

She then approached Arthur, and said:

"Cross my palm with a bit of silver, my pale-faced young gentleman, and I will let you into the secrets of the future."

"If you are in want of a shilling, I am sure you can have it, and I will give it you with the greatest pleasure," answered Arthur; "but I do not believe in fortune telling. Here is a shilling for you, and much good may it do you."

The old woman took the shilling, and looked gratefully into the boy's intelligent face, and said:

"You may not believe in fortune telling; but," she added, in a tone of entreaty, "give me your hand for a moment, and I will try to convince you."

The boy was half-inclined to resist. He did not extend his hand. As it hung listlessly by his side, the woman grasped it, and he reluctantly allowed it to remain in her palm.

She ran her eyes over the lines in a rapid yet critical manner, and her brow clouded, as if she traced there many sources of discomfort, and even of danger, to the little fellow.

Then she began chanting some verses to herself in a low tone. The words were not English words, and Arthur thought that she was mumbling an abracadabra in a foreign tongue.

He blushed at lending himself to what he called such mummery, and was about to snatch his hand away, when she let it fall, and exclaimed, in a thrilling tone:

"You have passed through more than one great peril, and there are others before. I can see that danger is lurking in the air. You are even now encompassed with a canopy of danger, although you know it not. Beware! Your life is valuable. Many attempts will be made to deprive you of it. Your enemies are powerful, yet you will triumph in the end. A glorious future is before you. Be circumspect, be wary; be cunning as a serpent, yet harmless as a dove!"

The old woman's manner seemed so sincere and truthful, that Arthur was much impressed with what she had told him. It must be remembered that he was but a boy, and therefore to be forgiven for entertaining a superstitious feeling. He was half-inclined to go into the house again and join Mr. Pope.

Hesitating as to what he should do, he stood still, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, when Sinclair came out of the stable, and exclaimed:

"Here's the pony. Come along. Ernest will ride his, and I shall walk."

"I think I would rather not go," replied Arthur.

"Why, what's the matter with you?"

"He's had his fortune told!" exclaimed Ernest, with a sneer.

Sinclair looked angrily at the old woman, and raising his whip, struck her sharply over the shoulders, saying, in an angry tone:

"Be off with you, instantly, you old hag. Be off, I say, or it will be the worse for you. I will have you imprisoned. Do you hear?"

"Don't strike her," said Arthur, in a tone of remonstrance.

"Hold your tongue, or I'll serve you the same," cried the young tyrant.

The fortune-teller glared at Sinclair in a malignant manner, and said, in freezing accents:

"The day will come when you will bitterly repent this outrage. I am old, but I shall live to see you pleading on your knees to me for mercy, which I will not accord."

With these words she hobbled off, like a toad whose venom has been discharged.

Arthur moved towards the house, as if he intended to enter it.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Sinclair. "The Australian's afraid."

"Yes," said Ernest. "The old woman's frightened him."

As these taunts reached him, Arthur was foolish enough to turn back.

"I am not afraid," he said, as his cheeks glowed indignantly; "and to convince you that I am not, I will ride your pony. Which is it?"

The two ponies were standing together in the yard. One was a bay, the other a roan.

The latter was Sinclair's. It was a strong little animal, and could trot its twelve miles an hour with ease.

When the roan was pointed out to him, he put his foot in the stirrup, and mounted with a grace and an agility that surprised the brothers.

When he was on its back, the roan began to kick, and the groom said:

"I can't make out why Brown-Dolly kicks so today, Master Sinclair."

"Oh, it's nothing," replied Sinclair. "Are you ready? Off you go!"

Ernest mounted, and the cavalcade, with Sinclair on foot, left the yard.

Brown Dolly seemed ill at her ease. Bending over his saddle, Ernest said:

"Which way shall I lead him?"

"In the direction of the Devil's Gap," replied Sinclair. "It will be a capital jump for him. The saddle!"

"That's what makes him kick, then?"

"To be sure it is."

When the boys reached the meadows, Ernest led his unsuspecting victim in a straight line for the Devil's Gap, which was one of the most dangerous gullies in all the country round.

(To be continued.)

FACETIE.

A TAILOR who, in skating, fell through the ice, declared that he would never again leave his hot goose for a cold duck.

BUSINESS IN NEW YORK.—A Dutchman describes New York as "berry fine people, who go about the streets scheming, each oder, and dey call that piziness."

COMPARISON OF THE SEXES.—"Women are said to have stronger attachments than men. It is not so. A man is often attached to an old hat; but did you ever know of a woman having an attachment for an old bonnet? Echo answers 'Never!'"

A TOUCHING INCIDENT.—A young minister went out to preach, and observed, during his discourse, a lady who seemed to be much affected. After meeting, he concluded to pay her a visit, and see what were the impressions of her mind. He approached her thus: "Well, madam, what were you so affected about today, during the preaching?" "La me," said the lady, "I'll tell you. About six years ago, I moved to this place, and all the property I had was a donkey. Shortly after the beast died, and to tell you the truth, your voice put me so much in mind of that dear old critter, that I couldn't help taking on and crying about it right in meetin'." No more questions were asked.

A DUTCH CHARGE.—An Irish lieutenant was sent for to drill a "Dutch company of soldiers"—he being an expert. He put them through quite nice till he gave the order. "Charge bayonets!"—and they did charge, too. At him they went, chasing him up hill and down dale. He was a pretty good runner, and managed to keep ahead of them; but, beginning to feel exhausted, he suddenly thought of the charge, "Halt!" which he cried in a stentorian tone. After recovering his wind, he says to them: "De jabber, yez the greatest Dutchmen ever I see! If yez chase rebels this way, yez'll do; but I don't want to be the rebels again, I'm sure."

ADVICE TO A YOUNG LAWYER.—The following is the advice of an examining judge to a young lawyer:—"Sir, it would be idle to trouble you further. You are perfect; and I will dismiss you with a few words of advice, which you will do very well to follow. You will find it laid down as a maxim of civil law, never to kiss the maid when you can kiss the mistress. Carry out this principle, sir, and you are safe. Never say 'boo' to a goose when she has the power to lay golden eggs. Let your face be long, your lips thin. Never put your hand into your own pocket when anybody's else is handy. Keep your conscience for your own private use, and don't trouble it with other men's matters. Plaster the judge, and butter the jury. Look as wise as an owl, and be as crafty as a town-clock."

SOME years ago, when I was travelling at the Eastward, the stage stopped and took in a lady, for the next town. She was a smart looking tailoress, with her lap-board and goose. The stage was now full, and one of the gentlemen observed—"We have a curious freight; for we have a grandfather, grandmother, five uncles, three aunts, four cousins, a minister, a merchant, a farmer, a blacksmith and a constable, which makes twenty-four, with the tailoress and a goose, though we are only ten." "We are very lucky if we have but one goose, and that a wise one," said the tailoress. "Is your's a wise one, madam?" asked the gentlemen. "Yes, according to the proverb, that a still tongue shows a wise head," replied the lady. "Thank you madam—I take and owe you one," he answered, and knocked under for the rest of the journey."

LOED CHIEF JUSTICE POLLOCK.—He was then placed under Dr. Roberts at St. Paul's school. A story is related on good authority that young Pollock, fancying that he was wasting his time there, as he intended to go to the Bar, intimated to the headmaster that he should not stay; and that the doctor, who was desirous of keeping so promising a lad, thereupon became so cross and disagreeable, that one day the youth wrote him a note saying he should not return. The doctor, ignorant of the cordial terms on which the father and son lived together, sent the note

to the father, who called on him to express his regret at his son's determination, adding that he had advised him not to send the note. Upon which the doctor broke out, "Ah, sir, you'll live to see that boy hanged." The doctor, on meeting Mrs. Pollock some years after his pupil had obtained University honours and professional success, congratulated her on her son's good fortune, adding, quite unconscious of the humorous contrast, "Ah! madam, I always said he'd fill an elevated situation."—*The Judges of England, with Sketches of their Lives, and Miscellaneous Notices connected with the Courts at Westminster.*

SCENE AT A FASHIONABLE BOARDING HOUSE.

Gen. [Who has been sent up stairs by green servant].—Good morning, Miss Loula! Is mamma in?
Miss Loula.—Oh, no! This is not our reception day!
Gen.—And does mamma leave you home alone?
Miss L.—No, sir. I am out, too!

A GENTLEMAN had been paying his addresses, for some time to a young lady by the name of Hunt, and finally married her. A few evenings after the happy event, as he was coming from her presence, he was accosted by an old friend. "Ah!" exclaimed he, "I see you still go hunting." "No," replied the gentleman, "I have bagged my game."

AN ECCENTRIC.

Rev. Mr. Peters, of Attleboro', was slightly eccentric and used sometimes to lose his way in fits of abstraction. He was also so good-natured, that people might say anything they pleased to him. One day he stayed among some of his parishioners who were burning charcoal, but so blackened that he did not recognize a single one of them.

"On you tell me," said he, "who I am, where I am from, and whether I am going?"

"O, yes," said they: "you are parson Peters, you came from Attleboro', and you are going to the wicked place."

The parson replied, drily:

"From the looks of the inhabitants, I should think I had got there already."

A VIRTU of sea-sickness described the sensation thus: "The first hour I was afraid I should die; and the second hour I was afraid I shouldn't."

AN ELONGATED COUNTERNANCE.

A well-known frequenter of Third Street, Philadelphia, stepped recently into a barber's shop, close to the North American building, sat in a shaving-chair, drew a newspaper from his pocket, and instructed the barber of the razor to take off his beard. The barber was an African. He simply replied:—

"Yes, boss," and produced his implements. The customer sat down. He was duly shaved. His face was wiped. He arose; donned his coat and hat.

"How much?" he asked, in a dolorous voice, as he adjusted his shirt-collar.

"Fifteen cents, boss."

"Why, I thought you shaved for ten cents at this shop."

"Dat's the average, sah," was the feely. "Ten cents is de price of a shave in dis yer shop. You come in here, sah, and read de news of Sheridan's victory, and your face got about six inches longer dan when you come in. If your face was like it was afore you read dat yer news, ten cents was de price. When you commenced to read about de defeat of Early, den your face stretched down about four inches. Dat's what makes it wurf fifteen cents for de shave."

The customer couldn't restrain a grin, though he was a Copperhead, and the hit at him was made by a "nigger." He laid down the fee, and walked out.

EATING THE FIRST OYSTER.—It has been often said that he must have been a bold man who first ate an oyster. This is an ignorance of the legend which teaches the first act of oyster-eating to a very natural cause.

It is related that a man walking one day picked up one of these savory bivalves, just as it was in the act of gaping. Observing the extreme smoothness of the interior of the shells, he insinuated his finger between them that he might feel their shining surface, when suddenly they closed upon the exploring digit, with a sensation less pleasurable than he anticipated. The prompt withdrawal of his fingers was scarcely a more natural movement than its transfer to his mouth. It is not very clear why people when they hurt their fingers put them into their mouths; but it is very certain that they do, and in this case the result was most fortunate. The owner of the finger tasted oyster juice for the first time, as the Chinaman in Elia's essay having burnt his finger tasted crackling. The savour was delicious; he had made a great discovery; so he picked up the oysters, forced open the shells, banquetted upon their contents, and soon brought oyster eating into fashion. And unlike most fashions, it has never gone and is never likely to go out.

EMANCIPATE YOUR GAS.—Britons! This is the

cry of our time. Let us, ha! ha! let us—hec, hec, throws a little light upon the subject, ha! ha! ha! The point is this. Gas is four shillings and sixpence per thousand cubic feet. Never mind what cubic feet are—but understand this. You ought to get the same quantity (and much better) for two shillings and ninepence. The difference goes into the pockets of the monopolist companies, who despise and defy you. Now, are you going on hearing this? If not, join the cheap gas movement, headed by the gallant George Flintoff. Paddington is up in arms, and has flung down the gage of battle. Up, up, and put the tyrannic Companies' pipes out. We will lead you on. You have recoiled from their charge too long, now is your time. Charge for cheap gas, and down with dear ditto.—*Punch.*

MOTTO FOR THE LATE TOLL-KEEPER OF SOUTH-WARK BRIDGE.—"Non tolli me Tugere." Freely translated, "I touch no more toll."—*Punch.*

A VEXED AND VERY VEXACIOUS QUESTION.—There is a question of another Italian loan of three millions. This seems destined to be the perpetual great difficulty that Italy, as an united kingdom will have to contend with, viz., the settlement of its capital.—*Punch.*

A FLOURISH BY OUR FLORIST.

Now men November chill benumbs,
In bloom are the chrysanthemums;
Now while its gloom the town beglums,
How bright are the chrysanthemums!

So to the Temple Garden comes
The world to the chrysanthemums:
By omnibuses, cabs, and "bruns,"
All flock to the chrysanthemums.

From splendid squares and squalid slums
They crush to the chrysanthemums.

Hear how the crowd, admiring, hums
Its praise of the chrysanthemums!

See how the children suck their thumbs
While viewing the chrysanthemums!

Miss Laura her piano strums,
Then hies to the chrysanthemums;

And Master Charles invites his chums
To see the famed chrysanthemums.

Some white as snow, some red as plums,
Ne'er grew grand chrysanthemums.

In India there are no beglums
So gay as the chrysanthemums.

Now sound the trumpets, beat the drums,
Let off your loudest a-la-rums,

For lo! great *Punch* the conqueror comes
To visit the chrysanthemums! *Punch.*

NOTE ON DRESS.—In an article that appeared lately on "Left-off Clothes," there was an omission of some moment. No mention was made of the fancy watch-makers have for second-hand things. They were also the last to leave off wearing clocks on their stockings.—*Punch.*

A FAST PERFORMANCE.—One Herr Tolmach, a clever conjuror à la Davenport, is the greatest traveller of the present day. He exceeds in speed the Persia; or any of the fastest Cunard boats, for he can go at the rate of from sixty to a hundred knots an hour.—*Punch.*

LOOKING AHEAD.

Harry: "I wish I were you, aunt!"

Aunt: "Why?"

Harry: "Because I should have such a jolly chap for a nephew! Wouldn't I give him a lot o' things next Christmas!" *Punch.*

A NICE THING IN CAPS.—A letter appeared the other day in the *Times* with the signature of "One who knows what he is writing about," and headed "Volunteer Percussion Caps." It is not to be supposed that caps so called are, as their name might be supposed to intimate, accustomed to go off of their own accord. Some of them, indeed, do not go off at all, but those that do mostly go off into small pieces, which fly about in all directions, occasionally into the rifleman's eyes.—*Punch.*

ANECDOTE.—THE BOY IS FATHER TO THE MAN.—When George III. was ten years old, and long before he came to the throne, the then Duchess of Cleveland said to him, "Should your Royal Highness ever be King of England, in what should you find your greatest happiness?" "In plum-pudding," replied the royal boy, thereby displaying that true old English spirit for which he was afterwards so distinguished.—*Punch's Pocket Book, 1865.*

TERMS OF THE TURF.

Examined and Explained, for the use of Riding Schools.

SCRATCHING A HORSE.—This operation is performed with a pin or a big darning-needle, whichever be preferred. By the rules of the Jockey Club, every owner of a race-horse is always bound to carry a pin cushion about him, that he may have a pin in readiness when he wants to scratch his horse.

"Entering" a horse.—Of course the simplest way

to do this, is to get his mouth wide open and then jump clean down his throat. If you can't do this yourself, get the smallest jockey you can find, and see if he can do it.

"Pulling" a horse.—When in any race an animal is said to have been pulled, what is meant is, that to make him run they had to tie him to another, and so to get him dragged or pulled over the course.

"Hagiology" or "hedgiology" is a term used in a steeplechase, and signifies the art of hedging, or of taking a fence.

A "handicap" race is one in which the names and weights of all the running horses are written upon little slips of coloured paper, which then are placed in any jockey's cap that happens to be handy, and the horse whose name is last in being drawn out of this handy cap, is held to win the race.—*Punch's Pocket Book, 1865.*

PROMISING FOR THE TORIES.—Mr. Gladstone, it is rumoured, will be in a position to reduce the taxation this year to a very considerable amount. The Conservatives are in hopes that besides taking off the Income Tax he will take himself off, and give them a chance. We wish they may get it!—*Fun.*

INES TO BE LUGGED INTO THE NEXT BURLESQUE.

"The barber's beery: place him in the arbour,
You see he's really now an *Ale Barber*!
Ale! alas, the word quite makes me pale,
Beer's at a discount under *Lord Mayor Ale*!" *Fun.*

WE understand that the Confederate soldiers have often been very badly off for clothes. This is to us most astonishing, seeing how often they have given a good dressing to the Yankees.—*Fun Almanack.*

"HACT AND HACTION."

Policeman: "Now then, cabby, move on."
Cabby: "Can't, sir."
Policeman: "Move on, I say."
Cabby: "Shan't, sir."
Policeman: "If you don't move on I'll take you in charge."
Cabby: "Mustn't, sir; I'm here by hact of Parliament—sixpence for hevry quarter of an hour." *Fun Almanack.*

NOTES AND QUEER 'UNS.—The colloquialism "put that in your pipe and smoke it," was derived from a saying of Queen Elizabeth's. When she made Sir Walter Raleigh one of the Council of War, in 1587, she gave him some parliamentary "returns," and said, "put that in your pipe and smoke it."—*Fun Almanack.*

RATHER TOO QUICK.

Visitor: "Yes, Mrs. Miffius, dear little Emma has your features, but I think she has her father's hair."
D. L. Emma: "Oh! now I see—it's because I have papa's hair that he wears a wig."
[Alas, poor Miff! he has always had the silly notion that no one could possibly perceive his artificial roofing.] *Fun Almanack.*

A CLUB ANECDOTE.—"Well," observed Dizzy to Derby, while enjoying a quiet weed in the smoking-room of the Carlton, "the members of our junior offshoot are spending a great deal of money on decorations, and pictures especially." "And if they are," replied Derby, "what can be better? Money spent on a canvas is always well laid out."—*Fun Almanack.*

QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

What are the two most sinful letters in the alphabet?—N V.
What are the two most intemperate letters of the alphabet?—X S.
What two letters of the alphabet shall become a adjective?—S N shah.
What two letters of the alphabet are an ornithological adjective?—B K.
What two letters of the alphabet are most like a peacock?—P N.
What two letters of the alphabet have least in them?—M T.
What two letters of the alphabet are best to drink? B R or A L.
What two letters of the alphabet are most like the cranium of a droue?—B Z.
What two letters of the alphabet resemble an affectionate remembrance?—A I. *Fun Almanack.*

DECEMBER.—Jolly old Christmas once more! Beef, pudding, and mistletoes! Holly and happiness! Good wishes everywhere, and joy universal! Bright, merry faces, blazing yule logs, forfeits, round games, story-telling and girl-kissing! Hail once more, cheery old friend! It cheers me anew to see thy bright face, encircled with crisp holly, thy snowy beard, that crackles under the touch, and to grasp once more thy jolly, hearty old hand. Five old-fashioned feast, let me plunge into thine harmless mirth, and drink my fill of thine innocent dissipations!

And yet I don't know. Christmas, after all, is the most melancholy period of the year, and we all know that the jollity we see around us is as sham as the gold on the pantomime dresses. No, it won't do. Bills, bills, bills, tumbling as they do headlong one after another into my letter-box, remind me every five minutes during the day that Christmas is, above all others, the season of extortionate rapacity. Thank goodness, the feeling of repletion from which I shall suffer towards the close of this dreadful month will soon pass away, and pleasant, cheery January will be here once again.—*Fun Almanack.*

OUR CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS AND CHRISTMAS CHEER.

ALTHOUGH in this country Christmas observances are not, it must be admitted, "what they used to be," mummers and mimers are yet extant amongst us, the wails and carol singers are still to be heard, and roast beef and plum-pudding are productions of the season that never fail to make their appearance.

As regards mumming—a custom which has descended as a remnant of the Roman Saturnalia, and received its name from the Danish *mumme*, a disguise or mask—it exists more generally, perhaps, in Staffordshire, Northamptonshire, Cornwall, and Devon than anywhere else. Formerly, mummers performed a sort of religious drama, and in Northamptonshire something like the old play is yet enacted; but the custom is dying out.

In Cornwall old women "go a-gooding," that is collecting from the richer inhabitants materials wherewith to make a Christmas cake or pudding; and on Christmas-eve the mirth begins in good earnest, and the "mock" or yule-log is lighted. The family gather round the hearth, and amuse themselves with games, the children being allowed "to sit up," as a special favour, to see the fun, and "drink to the mock." In the course of the evening the merriment is increased by the entry of the "goosey dancers," (or guised dancers), these being the boys and girls of the village, who have rifled their parents' wardrobes of old coats and gowns, and, thus disguised, dance and sing, begging money to make merry with. They are allowed great license in consequence of the season, it being considered ill-natured and churlish to take offence at anything they do or say. They are kindly treated, create much mirth, and keep up this mumming during the Christmas week. The *guany mirth* or "miracle" play is also performed, generally in a large room of some inn, by the young men, the cost of the purchase of dresses, &c., being met by subscription, whilst the young women contribute their services in making the costumes. It is, however, only a poor travesty of the ancient drama, the result produced being very tragical mirth indeed.

The streets of Chester and the villages around the quaint old city are paraded on Christmas-eve by numerous parties of carol singers, for whom, at many private houses, entertainment is provided in the proverbial style of Cheshire hospitality. The houses of rich and poor are decked for fourteen days with the glistening holly and mystic mistletoe; and there, as elsewhere, under the white shining berry, kisses are given or stolen which would at any other time be forbidden fruit. The farmers of Cheshire pass Christmas more gloomily than any other class; for by an ancient custom, which almost universally prevails, agricultural servants engage themselves from Christmas day to New Year's eve; and consequently the families of their employers are left to make shift for themselves for some five or six days, while their late servants resort to the towns and keep holiday. On the morning after Christmas day, hundreds of these farm servants male and female crowd the streets of Chester, dressed out in their holiday finery, which is not seldom of the most grotesque character, presenting all the brilliant colours of the rainbow. It is infinitely amusing to mix in the throng on such occasions, and watch these children of nature so strangely adorned—their straggling gait and fanciful apparel, to hear their quaint exclamations, and their outlandish dialects, which few even of the educated natives can understand without a glossary. They have just received their year's wages, and speedily invest the greater part of it in smock frocks, cotton dresses, plush waistcoats, or woollen shawls, all of the gayest and most showy colours. It is high carnival with the small shop keepers, and not less so with the tavern keepers, many of both sexes resorting to the inns to dance and make merry. The dancing of these Cheshire nymphs and swains is, however, not by any means on the light fantastic toe; which is a "caution" to look at. It is a very different performance indeed to that which an *habitué* of ball rooms is accustomed to witness, in association with

The garlands, the rose-colours, and the flowers, of this festive time.

Concerning Christmas cheer; it is to be remarked that although it has somewhat varied in its character, it is still as abundant as ever, if not indeed more profuse.

Of old time, the boar's head was held to be "the rarest dish in all the land." Till the middle of the 17th century it was customary to bring to gentlemen's tables on Christmas-day a boar's head with a lemon in its mouth; and although the custom has grown obsolete at the tables of the gentry, it still obtains here and there at those of the yeomanry, particularly in the northern parts of the kingdom, where a pig's head is usually brought to table with its mouth distended by either a lemon or an apple. A relic of the custom yet lingers at Oxford; where in Queen's College every Christmas-day a boar's head is brought into the refectory in great state and placed on the table; the following song being sung in chorus:

The boar's head in hand bear I,
Bedecked with boys and rosemarye,
And I pray you, masters, merry be!
Quotquot estis in convivio.
Caput april defero,
Roldens landes Domino.
The boar's head, as I understand,
Is the bravest dish in all the land;
Being thus bedecked with a gay garland,
Let us serve it caution.
Caput april, &c.
Our steward has provided this,
In honour of the King of Biss,
Which on this day to be served is
In Regimens Atrio.
Caput april, &c.

The turkey has succeeded to the place of honour on the Christmas-table from the date of its introduction into this country, about 1524; and it is mentioned as generally forming the chief portion of Christmas-fare, in 1578. The wild turkey is sometimes brought to table in this country. The flavour is delicious, and very similar to that of the partridge; but it rarely makes its appearance upon an English table on Christmas-day; though sometimes great efforts are made for that purpose. We have read in a Liverpool journal of a couple of wild turkeys being shot on the 4th of December in Canada West, 180 miles beyond Toronto, being there purchased by a gentleman who started with them the same afternoon for New York, and embarking there on the 10th for Liverpool, arrived at the latter port on the 19th; thus travelling some 5,000 miles in order to place the birds upon a friend's Christmas-table.

The bustard has almost disappeared; and, as a portion of Christmas-fare, is now almost unknown; but some persons may be yet living who may have seen abundance of them in the larders of large inns. It is, indeed, occasionally met with still; fine birds for the Christmas markets, coming principally from Norfolk, weighing from 20 to 25 lbs. The fat capon, weighing from 7 to 10 lbs., is also another favourite luxury of the season; but the goose is the most favourite and general dish with us, as it is on the continent.

Brawn is another dainty in great demand at Christmas time: it is supplied chiefly from Kent, Oxfordshire, and Hampshire. It is manufactured from the flesh of large boars, which are suffered to live in a half-wild state. This Christmas comestible comes to market in rolls of about two feet long, and ten inches in diameter, packed in wicker baskets. "Brawn, mustard, and malmsey wine, were," says an old chronicler, "directed for breakfast during Queen Elizabeth's reign."

Game-pies were formerly made at Christmas; and in the books of the Salters' Company there is a curious recipe "Fit to make a most choyce paaste of gamys, to be eten at ye Feste of Chrystmasse." This pie or "paaste of gamys" was to consist of a pheasant, hare, and capon, two partridges, two pigeons, and two rabbits, all boned and put into paste, (in the shape of a bird), with two mutton kidneys, forced meats, egg-balls, spice, catsup, and pickled mushrooms, &c.

The Corporation of the City of Gloucester present to the sovereign every Christmas, as a loyal offering, a lamprey pie, which is sometimes a costly gift, as lampreys are scarce at this season, and cost about a guinea apiece. The Severn is famous for its lampreys, and the good people of Gloucester celebrated for their peculiar mode of stewing them: a dish of them is a right royal feast.

But the great *pièce de resistance* of the English Christmas table is the national roast beef—baron or sirloin, as the case may be. Roast beef has been for ages the paramount viand and most honoured Christmas fare—a royal "baron" of beef having a prominent place even on the royal table at Windsor on Christmas-day.

Pies were made formerly much more generally than at present; Misson describing every family as making a Christmas pie—"a great nostrum," the composition of this pastry being a most learned mixture of neats' tongues, chicken, eggs, sugar, raisins, &c. The

Puritans, however, were bitterly averse to plum-pudding, and also to mince-pies, as Christmas luxuries; a poet of the period singing—

All plums the prophets' sons deery,
And spice-broths are too hot;
Treason's in a December pie,
And death within the pot.

Plum-broth and minced or shred pie having spices, fruit, &c., among their chief ingredients, is said to be in token of the offerings of the Eastern Magi; the custom of making mince-pies being derived from the paste images and sweetmeats given to the Fathers of the Vatican at Rome on Christmas-eve. Eating mince-pies at Christmas was formerly, in England, regarded as a test of orthodoxy against recusants. "We have never been witness," says Dr. Johnson, "of animosities excited by the use of mince-pies and plum-porridge, nor seen with what abhorrence those who could eat them at any other time, would shrink from them in December."

The *was-hal* and *drinc-hal* of our ancestors coincide with our "here's to you" and "I pledge you"; the washal or wassail bowl being said to be identical with the grace-cup of the Greeks and Romans. It is mentioned by very old writers, and was known in France long before the time of Vortigern and Rowena, to which period it is commonly referred. The "lor-ing-cup" was borrowed from the wassail bowl, though the latter was carried about with an image of the Redeemer. In the bursary of Jesus College, Oxford, is a huge punch-bowl, of silver-gilt, which will hold ten gallons, and weighs 278 oz. 17 dwts.; its accompanying ladle weighs 13½ oz., and will hold half a pint.

One circumstance there is connected with Christmas which is peculiarly in keeping with the true spirit of the great Christian festival, and which has characterized it at all periods, and in every land; and that is the care then especially bestowed upon the needy and forlorn. Charlemagne decreed that relief should be given at this season to those who were in prison; and an edict of an old council prohibited any one to be prosecuted from seven days before Christmas until after the Epiphany. The spirit still exists, and in no part of the world is it in more active operation than in England. Christmas with us is not merely a time of general hospitality; but the poor, the friendless, and the afflicted, are sought out, that they may be assisted and cheered; private benevolence emulating public munificence in the distribution of charitable gifts. Who can estimate the sums expended in this way in London alone during the Christmas festival? Charity flows from many fountains; and men then act as if they were convinced of the truth of the Polish sage, "that on Christmas night the heavens are opened; angels descend and walk the earth, and the celestial hosts gather around those who are in all their actions true and sincere Christians."

We will conclude with the old poet's merry welcome to the genial season:

Now, thrice welcome, Christmas! which brings us good cheer,
Mince'd-pies and plum-pudding, goof ale and strong beer;
With pig, goose, and capon, the best that may be—
So well doth the time with our stomachs agree.
Observe how the chimneys do smoke all about—
The coals are providing for dinner, no doubt;
But charls on whose tables no viands appear,
Oh, may they keep Lent all the rest of the year!
With holly and ivy, so green and so gay,
We'll deck up our houses as fresh as the day,
With bay and rosemary, and laurel complete,
And think ourselves each one a king in conceit.

SUPERSTITIONS CONCERNING THE MISTLETOE.

THE mistletoe was with the Druids an object of much higher veneration than the oak. They were accustomed to strew leaves and branches of the latter around their altars; but in honour of the former they had special ceremonies. Every year they assembled to receive what they regarded as gifts from the gods. A priest arrayed in white ascended the tree in the presence of the people, and, with a consecrated golden knife, cut the mistletoe, and threw it down into a sheet held for its reception. It was then distributed to the people, who preserved it with the utmost care, or gave small pieces to their friends as valuable new year's presents. They had not always, however, golden knives with which to perform the operation of cutting, and were obliged to use an inferior metal.

In the "Medallio History of Carausius," by Stukeley, the writer, in speaking of the winter solstice, or Christmas, says:—"This was the most respectable festival of our Druids, called yule-tide; when mistletoe, which they called 'all-heal,' was carried in their hands and laid on their altars, as an emblem of the salutiferous advent of the Messiah. The mistletoe they cut off the trees with their upright hatchets of brass, called 'celts,' put upon the ends of the staffs which they carried in their hands. Innumerable are these instruments found all over the British isles. The custom is still preserved in the north, and was till

ably at York. On the eve of Christmas-day they carry mistletoe to the high altar of the cathedral, and proclaim a public and universal liberty, pardon, and freedom to all sorts of inferior and even wicked people at the gates of the city, towards the four quarters of heaven." This was less than a century and a half ago.

All the northern nations of Europe entertained a great respect for the mistletoe at the time of the year when the sun approached the winter solstice; and the use of the plant was not unknown to the ancient Greeks and Romans, for we find allusions made to it in Virgil, who compares the golden bough in Inferno to the mistletoe. And some remnant of these ancient superstitions remain with us to this day, for we cannot gaze upon it without some slight feeling of reverence, although utterly disconnected with any religious ceremony, unless it be that of matrimony.

Mr. Archdeacon Nares says: "The custom longest preserved was the hanging-up of a bush of mistletoe in the kitchen or servants'-hall, with the charm attached to it that the maid who was not kissed under it at Christmas would not be married in that year." Of course, we would not charge our maidens of the present day with believing in such a superstition as this, but there are probably few of them who would like the season to pass away without having one kiss under the mistletoe. The mistletoe being so much associated at this period of the year with holly, laurel, ivy, and other evergreens, we find mention of it in connection with them by the poets. Gay says:

When rosemary and bay, the poet's crown,
Am bawled in frequent cries through all the town,
True judge the festival of Christmas near—
Christmas, the joyous period of the year!
Joy with bright holly all the temples strow,
With laurel green and sacred mistletoe.

THE MISTLETOE IN HEREFORDSHIRE.

The favourite site of the mistletoe is certainly the apple-tree. There is scarcely an orchard of any standing in the county without it, and in many it grows far too luxuriantly. The proportion of apple-trees which bear mistletoe in the central districts of the county, as obtained by a separate examination of more than two thousand trees, as they came, in several orchards, is as follows:—In orchards of comparatively new kinds of fruit, principally French and Italian apples, the average number of trees which bore mistletoe ranged from 13 to about 30 per cent.; in old, long-established orchards, the proportion varied from 20 to as high as 90 per cent.; whilst the general average from all the trees marked down was 39 per cent. Mistletoe-bearing trees. The actual numbers were 784 with mistletoe, and 1,218 without it. Whether the vicar-general shows any preference for any particular sort of apples is a point requiring further investigation.

There are certainly some facts which seem to show that this is the case. Some observers, with much orchard experience, think it likes best the more acid kinds of fruit, as the varieties of the Crab, the "Old Bromley," "Skymre's Kernel," "Hampton's Delight," &c. and is much less common on the "Bitter Sweet," the "Royal Wilding," the Norman, French, and Italian fruits, and on "pot-fruits" in general. It has also been observed that trees bearing white-fleshed apples are much more liable to be attacked by mistletoe than those which bear yellow-fleshed apples. The former correspond to the acid fruits, whilst the latter embraces nearly the whole of the new and French fruits of recent introduction, called bitter-sweet apples, and from which the best and mildest cider is made.

The mistletoe has now actually become an established export from this country, and there, perhaps, never was a year when so many people rejoiced in its presence at their Christmas festivities, as during that of 1863.

The following is an approximation towards the correct return of the quantity of mistletoe actually sent out of this county last December. The exact returns are as follows:

	Tons	cwt.	qrs.
Hereford, sent off	25	0	0
Wiltshire	7	15	0
Leicestershire	15	2	3
Moreland	2	11	1
Dumfries	3	3	0
Leicestershire	13	14	0
Berwickshire	0	16	0
Worcestershire	2	0	0
Lancashire	0	1	3
Ross	15	0	0
Northampton	2	0	0

making a total of 89 tons 33 cwt. actually sent off by rail. But the guards and engine-drivers had the privilege of exporting mistletoe on their own account, and did so by almost every train that left the county during the early part of December. An immense quantity went off in this way, and I am told that I greatly under-estimate it when I put it down at 25 tons in addition—thus making a grand total of more than 114 tons. The places to which it was chiefly sent

were Manchester and Liverpool (for their supply and that of towns further north), London, and Birmingham. The established price paid for it, when delivered at the stations, was from 4s. to 5s. per cwt., according to its condition; and the average rate of charge for the transit was about 30s. per ton; so that the whole expense of delivery may be said to be from £5 to £6 10s. per ton.

I have purposely given all these details; they are distinctive of the age in which we live. It is a practical, commercial, unpoetical period, when trains will wait for neither the peer nor the peasant, and when common-place railway trucks carry off romance—in the shape of mistletoe—at so much per ton! Had good Sir Walter Scott lived in these days, it would never have occurred to him to send his "merry men" to the "woods" for it—where, by the way, they would never have found it—but the mistletoe none the less would have reached him; and if he had chanced to look over his greengrocer's bill, he would, doubtless, have found some such items as these:—To a bunch of mistletoe, fine and full of berries, £1; to pieces of do. do. for decoration, 7s. 6d.

1864.

GOOD-BYE Old Year—good-bye!

Thanks for your courtesy

Since we have been together,

Still journeying side by side,

Both morn and eventide,

Through various weather.

You've shown us many a sight

Of beauty and delight

Fields in prime,

And richly-laden trees

Where revell'd birds and bees

In their time.

Did you sometimes chance to dream

Of some never-changing stream,

Sparkling free?

Of some ever-loving heart?

Then behold the vision part?

So have we.

Did you ever think to do

Much good—attaining too

On cliffs where knowledge grow

A high degree?

Yet falter in your aim,

Not without a sense of blame?

So did we.

You leave us icy flowers

On hedges, groves and bowers,

And scatter wide in showers,

Over vale, copse and niche,

Countless diamonds, rich and pure,

You're munificent, we're sure,

As well as rich.

Good-bye, Old Year! again

All your virtues we retain,—

All your faults we sweep away,—

Thus, when we bid adieu,

And pass away like you,

May some friend or neighbour true

Of us say.

L. H. S.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

EASY TO TRY.—It is said that a small piece of resin, dipped in the water which is placed in a vessel on the stove, will add a peculiar property to the atmosphere of the room, which will give great relief to persons troubled with cough. The heat of the water is sufficient to throw off the aroma of resin.

A RECIPE for a new method of indestructible ink is given in one of the German scientific journals, and may interest our readers. The ink is composed of twenty grains of sugar dissolved in thirty grains of water, to which is added a few drops of concentrated sulphuric acid. Upon heating this mixture, the sugar becomes carbonized; and when applied to the paper, leaves a coating of carbon which cannot be washed off. This stain is rendered more permanent by the decomposing action of the acid itself upon the paper; and when thus made, it resists the action of chemical agents.

STATISTICS.

SUNSHINE.—A curious return is regularly obtained in Scotland from above fifty stations of the Meteorological Society—a return of the number of hours of sunshine. Taking the mean of all these stations, the number of hours of sunshine in the last seven years has been as follows:—In 1857, 1,665; in 1858, 1,825; in 1859, 1,817; in 1860, 1,620; in 1861, 1,674; in 1862, 1,568; in 1863, 1,711. The number in 1856

averaged exactly five hours a day throughout the year. In the six months from April to September, the summer half of the year, there were 1,154 hours of sunshine in 1857, 1,261 in 1858, 1,302 in 1859, 1,083 in 1860, 1,094 in 1861, 1,052 in 1862, 1,135 in 1863, 1,239 in 1864. The number in 1858 averaged very nearly seven hours a day in these six months. In the eight years, 1857-64, the sunniest month was May in three instances, June in three, July in two.

THE amount of Federal debt outstanding up to the month of October was officially stated at 2,017,099,515 dols. 75 cents, being an increase of 61,000,000 dols. since the last monthly announcement. The interest then payable stood at 56,646,000 dols. in coin, and 28,657,000 dols. in lawful money. The amount in the Treasury was nearly 27,000,000 dols. and the unpaid requisitions 37,500,000 dols.

MISCELLANEOUS.

AN agitation is on foot to put an end to the ringing of the metropolitan church-bells, which are considered an annoyance to sensitive and nervous people.

THE Imperial Court of Rouen has just had to decide the grave question whether rooks come within the provisions of the game laws. The Correctional Court at Havre had decided that they did, but the Court of Rouen has quashed the judgment, on appeal.

THE Hong Kong Scotchmen are going to give a prize to be shot for by the London Scottish Corps at Wimbledon next year. It is to be called the China Cup, and its cost above £100. They might as well have let all comers have a crack for their teacup.

A MARVELLOUSLY fat boy is now being exhibited at St. James's Hall, London. He is stated to be ten years of age, 4 feet 10 inches high, weighs 18½ stone, measures 1½ yards round the waist, 24 inches round the calf of the leg, 17 inches round the arm, and 34 inches round the thigh; and notwithstanding, walks well!

A NEW invention for extinguishing fires has just been tried at St. Petersburg. About 130 pounds of a white powder were dissolved in a tub containing about 200 gallons of water. A large wooden construction, two storeys high, was then set on fire, and the liquid being pumped on the flames, they were extinguished without the least generation of vapour or smoke. The wood attacked by fire was covered, after having undergone the action of the liquid, with a light coating resembling varnish.

THE Viceroy of India held a magnificent durbar at Lahore on October 18. On the previous day he had invested with the Star of India, Rajah Sundher Sing, Rajah of Kuppottulla, in return for the distinguished services rendered by the Rajah in the campaigns of Delhi and Lucknow. The durbar of the 18th surpassed anything of the kind ever before seen in India. Not only the powerful chiefs and nobles of the Punjab were present, but warriors and princes from beyond the borders came to do homage to the Viceroy. The princes were gorgeously attired, and glittered with diamonds.

THE MISS NIGHTINGALE OF NEW ORLEANS.—Among the most recent arrivals from the South, we notice that of Mrs. Brand, who, during the last three years, has, by her devoted attendance upon the Confederate prisoners, earned for herself the noble title of "The Miss Nightingale of New Orleans." Mrs. Brand, who by her tact and courage passed scathless through the fiery ordeal of the reign of terror under Banks and Butler, was at length expelled by General Canby, and forcibly deported within the Confederate lines. She is, as we understand, an English subject, and it is expected that important results will follow from the revelations she has to make of the hideous atrocities perpetrated in the South, under Northern rule.

HOW A SCOTCH SERVANT LASSIE BECAME A RUSSIAN GENERAL.—A female general is something wonderful to hear of, yet here is an instance. The fine family of the late Emperor Nicholas was brought up from the cradle by English nurses and governesses, under the superintendence of an old Scotchwoman who was nurse to the present Emperor of Russia and Poland, Alexander II., in his infancy. This individual held (and may hold) the rank of general officer (for everything in Russia is measured by a strict military scale), and has been decorated with the order of St. Andrew, ennobled and enriched. Some nine-and-thirty years ago, she came a servant girl to Russia in a Scotch trader's family, who turned her adrift in St. Petersburg. A lucky chance procured her the situation of under-nurserymaid in the Emperor Paul's family, where she was placed about the person of Nicholas to teach him to speak English. His attachment to her was so great, that when he married he raised her to the head of his nursery establishment, where she went through all the military gradations of rank until she became a general.